

Reference-	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2

Cab 63/129

CLOSED
UNTIL
1971

MOST SECRET.

27th September, 1939.

I mentioned to you yesterday a matter that has been in my mind for some days, namely, as to whether we ought not to undertake a closer investigation than has taken place hitherto as to the situation in the event of Germany over-running Holland or Belgium or both. You will have noticed that German troops are reported to be concentrating east of the Rhine, which indicates at least a possibility of an attack on Holland.

What disturbs me is the thought that Germany, by occupying these countries, would acquire some loot of a very valuable kind. I suspect that at Belgian and Dutch ports, e.g. Antwerp, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, there are very large stocks of oil fuel and petrol. The Shell Company, for example, has a majority of Dutch Directors, and I should imagine that important depots would exist in Holland. At the outset of the last war we induced the

Belgians

Admiral of the Fleet the Rt. Hon. Lord Chatfield,
G.C.B., O.M., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.,
Offices of the Cabinet.

3

Belgians to destroy the oil fuel at Antwerp, and a fine old blaze it made covering the whole of the river. The quantity must be enormously larger now.

Holland, I believe, has quite a nice little Navy on which you are probably much better informed than I. Anything in the way of destroyers, motor boats and so forth would not come amiss. If Holland is attacked and goes under we ought to secure that these ships come across.

Apart from Navies, Holland has, to my knowledge, a considerable shipping. Dutch tonnage, for example, comes fourth in the order of users of the Suez Canal. I understand there are a large number of Dutch tankers, though I have no particulars. Our arrangements ought to be sufficiently good to ensure that these are extricated from Dutch ports and come over to this country. Similarly, at the first sign of the occupation of Holland (which would put the mouth of the Scheldt in the hands of Germany), we ought to get the Belgians to move their shipping out.

Both

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Both Holland and Belgium have a certain number of aircraft. The Dutch aircraft and aviators in particular are, I believe, particularly good. We ought to assure that if these aviators cannot defend their own country the remnant, at any rate, come over here.

The Belgians have a pretty useful industry and must have masses of machine tools. For example, they have an armament industry at Liege. I do not know much about the Dutch industry apart from shipbuilding, but they have a flourishing aviation industry. Here again there must be a number of valuable machine tools. Both the Dutch and the Belgians must possess very large numbers of artisans and mechanics who would be invaluable to our industry, just as are some of the Czechs who have taken refuge here.

I will not, however, pursue the list of "loot" which either Germany or we ourselves might get from Holland, as part of my object is to suggest that we should obtain more accurate information than an individual like myself can supply on this subject.

It is, of course, very difficult in present circumstances, when neither the Belgians nor the Dutch are willing

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
CAB 63/129									
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
Reference:-									

5

willing to discuss such a horrid contingency as a German occupation of their countries, to make arrangements as to what is to be done in these matters in the event of an attack.

If, however, we could make up our minds as to what we think ought to be done it is possible, if and when the emergency arises, that we might secure at least a part of our objectives.

In my view we should envisage the following aims:-

- (1) If circumstances permit, to secure that the most important of the Dutch and/or Belgian assets in the way of fleets, merchant ships (especially tankers), aircraft, oil fuel, skilled labour, machine tools, tugs and barges (which are always useful in war and might be invaluable if the submarine campaign gets bad), should be brought over to this country on the understanding that we would hire it or buy it them with a view to its return after the war.
- (2) That, if time does not permit us to accomplish this, we should try and secure that some of the items of special value to the enemy, like oil fuel, is destroyed and does not fall into German hands.
- (3) If we cannot induce the Dutch or the Belgians to carry out the necessary destruction themselves, we should have full information as to where such objectives are situated with a view to destroying them ourselves by air.

Now

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

REFERENCE:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

6

Now the first thing to be done is to obtain reliable information as to the assets of the kind I have indicated and others which I ^{may} have overlooked.

I wondered whether you, as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, could arrange for this to be done by, say, the Joint Intelligence Committee, who probably have access to a lot of information that is not available to me and could throw a lot of light on the subject.

I have been wondering also whether some preparatory work might not be done by seeing representatives of bodies like the Shell Company. General Sir George Macdonogh, for example, the famous D.M.I. of the last war, is a high functionary, if not a Director, of the Shell Oil Company and might be able to advise. In the shipping world also there are many people with Dutch connections. In the business world people like Lord Swinton, Lord Wigram, Lord Cromer, have close affiliations with Belgian industry and might possibly be harnessed to the good work.

As I have already said, however, the first thing to do is to get the information, and I wondered if you would

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
Reference:-									
CAB 63/129									
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Public Record Office

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

would be willing to turn the wonderful machine that
you control on to this as a start. It would be a
fine thing if the emergency arose and you were able
to suggest at once what ought to be done.

Yours ever,

SECRET

7th October, 1939.

My dear Lord Hankey,

With reference to the enquiry which the Prime Minister asked you to undertake at this morning's meeting of the War Cabinet, into the question of plans for salving or destroying Belgian and Dutch resources, I imagine that you will have dealings with a large number of departments and individuals, and that you will almost certainly require a reinforcement of staff. I have therefore asked Jacob to stand by for any instructions you may wish to give him.

Yours
H. L. Ismay

The Right Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

MOST SECRET AND URGENT.

9

7th October, 1939.

You will be receiving shortly, if you have not received it already, a copy of a memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (W.P.39(72)), together with a Conclusion of the War Cabinet, on the subject of certain measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany.

I have been asked by the War Cabinet to co-ordinate the arrangements of the different Departments and am proposing to hold a meeting at the Cabinet Offices, Richmond Terrace, on Monday at 3 p.m. I should be much obliged if you could nominate a representative of your Department to be present.

The Rt. Hon. Leslie Burgin, M.P.,
Minister of Supply.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

21

You will remember that at the meeting of the War Cabinet this morning I was asked to co-ordinate the arrangements of the Government Departments concerned for putting into effect as far as possible the measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany, as recommended by the Chiefs of Staffs Committee in their Report W.P.(39) 72.

I am proposing to hold a meeting of representatives of the Departments concerned on the afternoon of Monday, October 9th at 3 p.m. at the Cabinet Offices, Richmond Terrace. I should be grateful if you could nominate a representative of your Department to attend.

The Rt. Hon. Leslie Hore-Belisha, M.P.,
War Office.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPIES MAY BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

MOST SECRET AND URGENT.

11
7th October, 1939.

The War Cabinet this morning had before them a Report by the Chiefs of Staffs Committee recommending certain measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany (W.P.(39) 72).

In approving the Report the War Cabinet asked me to undertake the supervision and co-ordination of the arrangements by Departments for giving effect to the Report.

I am arranging a meeting at the Cabinet Offices on Monday, October 9th at 3 p.m. Although there is no specific action to be taken by the Foreign Office I have no shadow of doubt that it would be of great value to have a representative of the Foreign Office at the meeting.

I should be very grateful, therefore, if you could arrange for someone to be present.

The Hon. Sir Alexander Cadogan, G.C.M.G., C.B.,
Foreign Office.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

12

Reference:-
CAB 63/129

References:

CAB 63/129

MOST SECRET AND URGENT.

13

7th October, 1939.

You will remember that at the meeting of the War Cabinet this morning I was asked to co-ordinate the arrangements of the Government Departments concerned for putting into effect as far as possible the measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany, as recommended by the Chiefs of Staffs Committee in their Report W.P.39(72).

I am proposing to hold a meeting of representatives of the Departments concerned on the afternoon of Monday, October 9th at 3 p.m. at the Cabinet Offices, Richmond Terrace. I should be grateful if you could nominate a representative of your Department to attend.

I have already seen Admiral Binney, who has the Admiralty arrangements in hand, and I think it might be useful if he were present as well as the Admiralty representative.

The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, M.P.,
Admiralty.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

MOST SECRET AND URGENT.

14

7th October, 1939.

You will remember that at the meeting of the War Cabinet this morning I was asked to co-ordinate the arrangements of the Government Departments concerned for putting into effect as far as possible the measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany, as recommended by the Chiefs of Staffs Committee in their Report W.P.39(72).

I am proposing to hold a meeting of representatives of the Departments concerned on the afternoon of Monday, October 9th at 3 p.m. at the Cabinet Office, Richmond Terrace. I should be grateful if you could nominate a representative of your Department to attend.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Kingsley Wood, M.P.,
Air Ministry.

Reference:-	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE		1	2	3	4	5	6
CAB 63/129	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION		1	2	3	4	5	6

MOST SECRET AND URGENT.

15
7th October, 1939.

You will be receiving shortly, if you have not received it already, a copy of a memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (W.P.39(72)), together with a Conclusion of the War Cabinet, on the subject of certain measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany.

I have been asked by the War Cabinet to co-ordinate the arrangements of the different Departments and am proposing to hold a meeting at the Cabinet Offices, Richmond Terrace, on Monday at 3 p.m. I should be much obliged if you could nominate a representative of your Department to be present.

R.H. Cross, Esq., M.P.,
Minister of Economic Warfare.

Public Record Office

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

MOST SECRET.

16

OFFICES OF THE WAR CABINET,
RICHMOND TERRACE,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

9th October, 1939.

Dear Hankey,

I think you will wish to have a copy of the Confidential Annex to the Conclusions of Saturday's War Cabinet on the subject of the measures to be taken in the event of an invasion of Holland and Belgium by Germany (W.M. (39) 40th Conclusions, Minute 6). I am therefore enclosing a copy.

...

Yours sincerely,

EEB Bridge

The Right Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,
H.M. TREASURY.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

OFFICES OF THE WAR CABINET,
RICHMOND TERRACE,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

See Lord Hankey

This schedule is not complete under the headings of "Gold and Securities" and "Machine Tools". I believe you are waiting to hear from the Bank of England about the first of these, and it will then be necessary to consider whether it is possible to prepare, in peacetime, any plan for the removal of the gold when the time comes, possibly with Dutch and Belgian co-operation. I have written to the Ministry of Supply about the second point, and asked for an immediate answer.

Ym Llawlyd
Deddfau

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Draft returned.

18

Secret.

FOREIGN OFFICE. S.W.1.

10th October, 1939.

My dear Minister,

Colonel Jacob has been kind enough to send me the note of yesterday's meeting, together with your corrections.

I have now prepared the enclosed draft to Clive at Bruesele, and I should be grateful if you would kindly look at it. I should like to be sure that it accurately represents the intentions of the Committee, before it is despatched. I should be grateful if you could return it with any amendments you wish to make.

The draft to Bland at The Hague will be on the same lines, with necessary variations, and is at present in preparation.

Yours sincerely,

W. Strang

The Right Honourable
Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

19

MOST SECRET

11th October, 1939.

My dear Strang,

I am returning the draft daspatch to our Ambassador in Brussels which seems to me to meet the case very well.

I have made one or two alterations, the most important of which is a substitute for present paragraph 8. I agreed this last night with Sir Richard Hopkins and Sir Frederick Phillips at the Treasury in the presence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. They also approved paragraphs 7 and 9.

There are also other less important suggestions in paragraphs 26 and 29.

When you come to draft the letter to the Hague, you will perhaps bear in mind that the Governor of the Bank of England is sending over a reliable young official to take soundings with his opposite number in Holland as to whether they will not take corresponding action. It is believed that the number of bearer securities in Holland is much larger than in Belgium, but it is unlikely that they would be willing to move them until the last moment.

W. Strang, Esq., C.B., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office.

Mr. Montagu Norman

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
Reference:-					

19th

Mr. Montagu Norman is not optimistic as to the result of this overture. It may result in a rebuff or Mr. Tripp, the Governor of the Bank of Holland, may at once approach his Government, from whom you may hear more. I think, therefore, that you should let Lord Halifax know what is afoot.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Paragraph 8.

If the Belgian Government is prepared to discuss the matter of gold perhaps you could take the opportunity to raise with them also the question of negotiable securities, e.g. foreign investments in the shape of bearer bonds and stocks, particularly dollar securities. It is important that these valuable assets should not fall into the hands of Germany, but we are given to understand that their number in Belgium is not very large. They are for the most part not held in the Central Bank, but are probably scattered among banks and private institutions, a fact which may present difficulties. Even if the Belgian Government is unwilling to consider moving gold or securities out of the country in advance of the emergency, they should at any rate prepare a plan for doing so at the first possible moment when the German intention to invade becomes clear. We should be prepared to co-operate if desired. And if in the last resort they should be caught without a plan, we hope that you will use your utmost endeavour to induce them to send out of the country as much as possible of the gold and securities that still remain there.

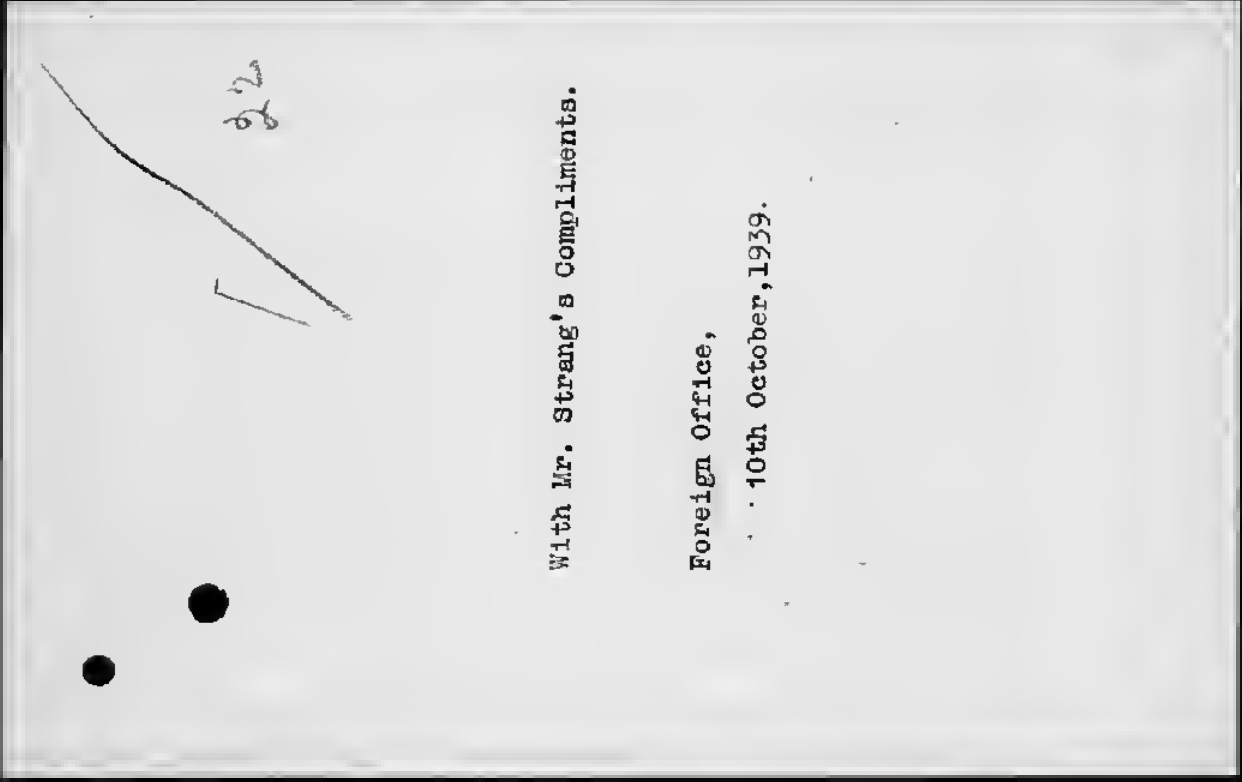
A

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

B

You should also inform them that we would be prepared to assist them to the best of our ability, and, you should have in mind that, in the last resort, we should be bound to act in defence of our vital interests in the case of dock and harbour facilities and oil supplies. In that event the co-operation of the Belgian authorities would be of the utmost value.

Reference:-	
CAB 63/129	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
1	2
3	4
5	6
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	



With Mr. Strang's Compliments.

Foreign Office,

10th October, 1939.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6	CAB 63/129			
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION						Reference			

23

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

10th October, 1939.

SECRET.

Dear Admiral Binney,

In accordance with the conclusions reached at yesterday's meeting of Lord Hankey's Committee, I have consulted Lord Halifax about the proposal that four Naval Captains should be sent to Holland and Belgium in the guise of couriers, on reconnaissance in Dutch and Belgian ports.

2. Lord Halifax is doubtful of the propriety of this proposal in view of the delicacy of the question of military collaboration between His Majesty's Government and the Belgian and Netherlands Governments in advance of hostilities. Apart from this, the despatch of these officers in the character of couriers might lead to complications. He would prefer, therefore, that the proposal should be suspended.

3. If, however, the Admiralty attach great importance to this proposal, and consider that there are strong military....

Vice-Admiral T.H. Binney, C.B., D.S.O.,
ADMIRALTY.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITH OUT PERMISSION

24

military reasons for pursuing it, Lord Halifax would be glad if he could be more fully informed of the military grounds for the proposal and the results which it is hoped to achieve, and he would then reconoider the matter.

(sgd) W. STRANG.

P.S. Copies of this letter have been sent to Lord Hanksy and General Ismay.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

25

Mr. Leach

FOREIGN OFFICE. S.W.1.

11th October, 1939

My dear Minister,

I am most grateful for your two letters of October 11th, about the drafts to Brussels and The Hague.

I now enclose a draft to The Hague in which I have taken account of the amendments you made in the letter to Brussels, and of the information about the gold and securities given in your two letters under reference.

Yours sincerely,

W. Stanger

The Right Honourable

Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION		

26

11th October, 1939.

MOST SECRET & URGENT

My dear Strang,

I return the draft letter to the Hague.

I have made suggestions for amendments to paragraphs 5, 23, 24, 31, 32 and 34 (original numbering).

I have shown the passage about gold reserve and negotiable securities, paragraphs 10 to 12, to Sir Richard Hopkins who approves them.

Yours sincerely,

W. Strang, Esq., C.B., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE											
CAB 63/129											
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
Reference:-											

27

11th October, 1939.

SECRET & URGENT

My dear Phillips,

Last night I showed you and Hopkins an extract from the draft letter that the Foreign Office propose to send to our Ambassador in Brussels dealing with the question of gold and negotiable securities.

They have just sent me over their draft of the letter to the Hague.

Would you mind looking through paragraphs 10 to 12. You need not hesitate to make any alterations you think desirable.

Sir Frederick Phillips, K.C.M.G., C.B.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION		
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

28

11th October, 1939.

MOST SECRET.

URGENT.

My dear Strang,

Since I sent you a few minutes ago my comments on your draft despatch to our Ambassador in Brussels I have again seen the Governor of the Bank of England, together with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Richard Hopkins and Sir Frederick Phillips. Someone whom I took to be an official of the Bank was also there.

The Governor confirmed that he is sending an emissary to Holland but emphasized that his visit is of an informal character. The Governor was not at all hopeful about getting the gold away before the emergency. He said that this could not be done without the fact being known, and he did not believe that the Dutch Government would allow the Bank to take action. I then stressed the point that if the gold could not be got away before the emergency, there should at least be an emergency plan so

that

W. Strang, Esq., C.B., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office.

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION						
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						
CAB 63/129						
Reference:-						

28^A

that, even if only a few hours were available, the gold could be moved. That at least would be a second best arrangement. We all urged, however, that it would be much better if they would get the gold away before the emergency arises. It was clear by the way that, as in the case of Belgium, securities which are private property would be harder to deal with than gold which is Government property.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Copyright - Not to be reproduced photographically without permission

Public Record Office

29
FOREIGN OFFICE. S.W.1.

12th October, 1939.

SECRET

My dear Minister,

I enclose a note on a conversation I had with the Netherlands Minister this morning. The Minister was most aecretive, but I have the impression that the story about our belief in the imminence of an attack upon Holland may perhapa be the result of some mis-apprehenaion ariaing out of the aoundings which are being taken by the Bank of England with the Bank of Holland.

Yours sincerely,
W. Stanger

The Right Honourable

Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,

6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1
PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

The Netherlands Minister came to see me this morning (as Sir A. Cadogan was unable to receive him) to say that he had just heard from a Dutchman of the highest repute in London (whose name he was not free to give me) that the latter had received information from a person of authority in London, who would be in a position to know what he was talking about, that His Majesty's Government had strong indications that Germany would invade Holland within the next few days. The Minister said that he was not free to tell me who this British informant was, but the latter's character was such that he felt bound to bring this information to the Foreign Office at once. He apologised profoundly for coming to us with this mysterious story, and for being unable to disclose his source. He was the last person in the world to be an alarmist, but he felt sure that if His Majesty's Government had had any such information they would not have failed to warn the Netherlands Government either through himself or through Sir Neville Bland, so that necessary precautions could be taken. He thought that the Netherlands Intelligence Service was well informed about German troop movements on the Netherlands frontier, and that if anything out of the ordinary had taken place, they would have heard about it. If an attack came, the Netherlands would resist to the utmost, and their preparations, including the inundation scheme, were in a state of readiness.

2. I asked the Minister if he could tell me whether the British informant held an official position or not. The Minister did not give me a direct answer to this question, but my impression is, from what he said, that the person in question is not an official but is in close contact with official quarters.

3. I told the Minister that, so far as I knew, we had no strong indications pointing to the probability of a German attack on Holland within the next few days. If the Germans delivered an offensive in

the/

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

the West, there was always the chance that they might find it necessary to try to go through the Low Countries, and this was a possibility which we naturally always had in mind; but I did not think we had any information to suggest that an invasion of the Low Countries was imminent.

4. The Minister said that what had passed between the Dutchman in question and his English informant was not concerned with the possibility of an attack at some time or other, but pointed definitely to an attack within the next few days.

5. Mr. Jobb has since made enquiries from S.I.S. who say that the Dutch Intelligence count on being able to give us 48 hours warning of a German attack; that there are no indications that such an attack is imminent; that there are no signs of German reconnaissances (without which the Germans would not launch a major military operation), and that the Germans are occupied in defensive works on the Dutch frontier.

6. I am informing the Minister that I have made enquiries, and that we have no information to confirm the suggestion that an attack is imminent.

(sd) W. Stang

12th October, 1939

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPIES - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

31

12th October, 1939.

SECRET

My dear Strang,

Many thanks for your letter of even date about your conversation with the Netherlands Minister this morning. I do not think somehow that the Minister's impressions can have resulted from my conversations with the Governor, though the description of the person with whom he had talked would rather fit. The point is, however, that on every occasion I have been at pains to say that the emergency we were discussing is one for which one could not foresee the date. It might be six months hence, or it might be in a week's time^{or next}. In fact I have repeatedly declared my personal opinion that an attack on Holland is much less likely than one on Belgium owing to the fact that it would be an advantage to Germany for the same reasons as in the last war to keep Holland neutral. Nevertheless for the reasons you give in your letter, it was obvious that precautions which would take long to work out ought, as a matter of prevision, to be put in hand. However, one never can tell how people will re-act.

Yours sincerely,

W. Strang, Esq., C.B., C.M.G.,
Foreign Office.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						CAB 63/129						COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
1	2	3	4	5	6							1	2										

Reference:

gue Reference

33

October 13th, 1939

Secret

C 15287/G)

With the compliments of Mr. Kirkpatrick

34

C 16287/G.

12th October, 1939.

Immediate.

SECRET.

Although our attempts to start staff conversations with the Belgian Government on purely military matters have not so far been successful, there is a cognate question which it is important that we should, if possible, discuss with them at the earliest opportunity, namely, the possibility of denying to the enemy, or obtaining for our own use, certain military and economic resources in Belgium in the event of Belgium being invaded and subsequently overrun by Germany.

2. We take it as axiomatic that Belgium would resist invasion by Germany and call for our assistance, and we assume that if the country were overrun the Belgian Government would, as in the last war, remove themselves, and continue the struggle in company with their allies. That being so, it would be to the interest of the Belgian Government no less than of ourselves that they should leave behind ...

His Excellency
The Right Honourable
Sir R. Clive, G.C.M.G.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

35

- 2 -

behind them as little as possible in the way of military and economic resources which would be of value to Germany in the conduct of the war.

3. It is clear that if such resources are to be either removed or destroyed, this cannot be effectively improvised at the last moment, and the ideal course would be for the two Governments to concert in advance such arrangements as might be necessary to secure this end.

4. It is on the possibility of making an approach to the Belgian Government in this sense that we wish to consult you and to receive from you at the earliest possible date an expression of your views.

5. We are aware that the Belgian Government are anxious to avoid doing anything that might come to the ears of the German Government, and be regarded by them as a hostile act. We realise, therefore, that it is unlikely that the Belgian Government would agree to the joint preparation of plans for destruction. It might, however, be possible for you discreetly to draw their attention to the problem presented by the danger of these assets falling into German hands in the event of a German attack. You could ...

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

Reference:-

could suggest that the Belgian Government might consider, if they had not already done so, the possibility of themselves preparing plans to destroy such assets, or to remove at short notice such of them as might be transportable to places of greater safety in the United Kingdom or France. You might add that His Majesty's Government would welcome such action on the part of the Belgian Government, and would for their part gladly give all the assistance in their power to facilitate the removal, and, where removal is impossible, the destructions of such assets.

6. We should be glad to know what you think of this suggestion. In order that you may be in a position to judge of the character of the problem, I send you the following details of some of the chief items which we have in mind.
Gold Reserve and negotiable securities.

7. We believe that the Belgian Government have already removed part of their gold reserve to a place of safety, but a substantial proportion still remains. The evacuation of this bullion would be a considerable problem if it had to be undertaken in a hurry when transport facilities were disorganised. Do you think you could suggest to the Belgian Government the desirability, as a measure of precaution, of getting this gold away in good time?

8. If ...

8. If the Belgian Government are prepared to discuss the matter of gold, perhaps you could take the opportunity to raise with them also the question of negotiable securities, e.g. foreign investments in the shape of bearer bonds and stocks, particularly dollar securities. It is important that these valuable assets should not fall into the hands of Germany, but we are given to understand that their number in Belgium is not very large. They are for the most part not held in the Central Bank, but are probably scattered among banks and private institutions, a fact which may present difficulties. Even if the Belgian Government are unwilling to consider moving gold or securities out of the country in advance of the emergency, they should at any rate prepare a plan for doing so at the first possible moment when the German intention to evade becomes clear. We should be prepared to co-operate if desired. And if in the last resort they should be caught without a plan, we hope that you will use your utmost endeavour to induce them to send out of the country as much as possible of the gold and securities that still remain there.

9. We are in touch with the Treasury and Bank of England on the whole question, but we should be glad to receive your views.

Stocks ...

38

Stocks of Raw Materials.

10. The most important of these is oil. Other important commodities are copper, tin, zinc, cobalt, nickel, uranium, iron and steel and ferro alloys, manganese, molybdenum, wolfram, chrome, antimony, industrial diamonds, flax (including flax seeds).

11. We understand that action is already in hand to move stocks of copper and cobalt from Belgium, at the initiative of the Belgian Manager of the Union Minière. The Ministry of Economic Warfare are also proposing to make a discreet approach to certain other British firms having commercial interests in Belgium, and to invite them to take what action they can to reduce stocks of raw materials in Belgium.

12. It is desirable that stocks should be reduced to a minimum since, except in the case of oil, little can be done at the last minute in the way of destruction. Stocks of oil could, however, be destroyed or run off, and it is most important that all possible steps should be taken to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. Do you think that the Belgian Government have this in mind, and that they have plans for the destruction of their oil stocks in the event of their having to retreat before the enemy? Do you think that ...

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

that an approach could be made to the Belgian Government urging that they should prepare the necessary plans for destruction, if they have not already done so?

13. If no such approach proves to be possible in present circumstances, it is important that you should, in the event of an invasion of Belgium, take steps to secure that the Belgian Government destroy or otherwise dispose of their stocks of oil to prevent their falling into German hands, and you should bear this in mind.

14. I would add for your own information that if the Belgians should fail to destroy their own stocks of oil, we should have to take such steps as were open to us to destroy them in our own interests, and alternative plans for this are being prepared.

Transportation.

15. The most important item from this point of view is shipping, including oil tankers, cargo ships, salvage vessels, tugs, dredgers, and river barges,

16. We believe that the Belgians are fully alive to the need of removing what they can of their mobile shipping when the time comes, and it is of the greatest importance that sea-going ships, especially tankers, should be safely removed from Belgian ports to ports in the United Kingdom or France

at ...

17. It is doubtful whether anything can be done in the way of salvage or demolition of tugs, barges or dredgers without the active co-operation of the Belgian Government; but we consider that their removal or destruction, preferably the former would be a matter of importance.

Locomotives and Rolling Stock.

Mechanical Transport.

Figure 1

CAB 63/129

as to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. You may think it possible to draw their attention to this now, but in any event the point should be strongly impressed upon them in the event of invasion. Your Military Attaché is being instructed accordingly.

Machine Tools.

21. We are considering an approach to Belgian industrial interests with a view to the preparation of a plan for the removal or destruction of particular machine tools in the event of emergency. Should an emergency arise you should urge the Belgian Government to take steps to secure their destruction.

Aerodrome facilities.

22. The Air Ministry are instructing your Air Attaché, in the event of invasion, to impress on the Belgian air authorities the importance of preventing aerodrome facilities from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Aircraft and aircraft personnel.

23. The Air Ministry will also arrange through your Air Attaché for Belgian civil aircraft and aircraft personnel to be flown out in the event of invasion.

Military Aircraft.

24. The Air Ministry are making arrangements, through your Air Attaché, for the routing and reception of military aircraft ...

6	5	4	3	2	1
12	11	10	9	8	7
6	5	4	3	2	1

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-	PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE										1	2	3	4	5	6
	CAB 63/129										1		2			
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION																

We 044

43

we should be bound to take such steps as were open to us to carry them out ourselves, and the necessary plans have been prepared. See Kirkpatrick's secret letter to you of September 28th, 1939.

General.

29. You will see that in some of the above cases it may be possible for us to take action now, or to lay plans in advance without the necessity of consultation with the Belgian Government, but in certain other cases the co-operation of the Belgian Government is essential if the best results are to be ensured.

30. The point on which we want your advice as soon as possible is whether you think any approach can be made to the Belgian Government at all at present, and if so in what form, and in respect of what subjects. Subject to the following sentence, you should not make any approach to the Belgian Government pending further instructions. Whether or not any approach can be made now, it is essential, however, that if any sudden emergency arises and Belgium is invaded, you should approach the Belgian Government immediately without waiting for instructions, and urge them to take every step in their power to deny to the enemy all the various facilities and resources referred to above. The removal of the gold reserve ...

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

- 11 -

44

reserve and negotiable securities, and the destruction of oil supplies are of especial importance. You should also inform them that we would be prepared to assist them to the best of our ability, and you should have in mind that, in the last resort, we should be bound to act in defence of our vital interests in the case of dock and harbour facilities and oil supplies. In that event the co-operation of the Belgian authorities would be of the utmost value. Your Service Attache will receive more detailed information than can be given in this letter and more precise instructions as to the results we desire to secure.

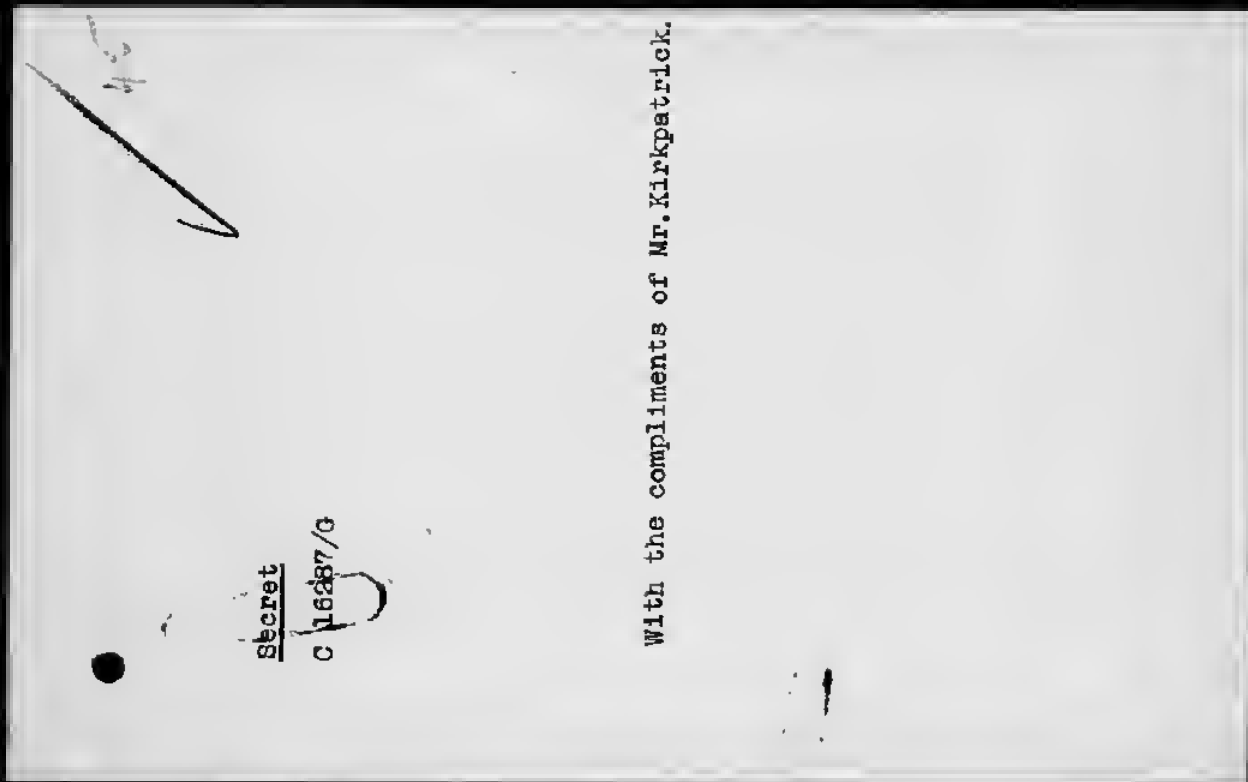
(Signed) A. Cadogan.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION



Secret

C 16287/0

With the compliments of Mr. Kirkpatrick.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
CAB 63/129									
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Reference

46
12th October 1939.

IMMEDIATE.

SECRET.

(C 16287/G)

As you will see from the enclosed copies of correspondence with Ismay of the Committee of Imperial Defence, the question of staff talks with the Dutch has been under consideration.

2. The problem of staff talks with the Belgians has also been carefully considered during the last few weeks, and Olive has had some secret conversations with Speck. I enclose two telegrams from him which show how the matter stands. As we expected, the Belgian Government refused to take part in any kind of official staff conversations, though we still have some hope that part of any rate of our object may be achieved, either through the intermediary of the Military Attaché or by using some other less orthodox channel.

3. We assume that a request from us for the opening of/

Sir N. Bland, K.C.V.O., C.M.G.,
etc., etc., etc.

Reference:-
CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

of official staff conversations with the Netherlands Government would not be favourably received. On the other hand, it may be that there is a chance that something might be done discreetly through the Service Attachée or some other unobtrusive channel. We are in some doubt as to the best line of approach and we should be grateful to have your views.

4. Apart from the question of military conversations properly so-called, there is a cognate question which it is important that we should, if possible, discuss with the Netherlands authorities at the earliest opportunity, namely the possibility of denying to the enemy, or obtaining for our own use, certain military and economic resources in Holland in the event of Holland being invaded and subsequently overrun by Germany.

5. We assume that the Netherlands would resist invasion by Germany. We should also suppose (though on this point we should be glad of your views) that if the country were overrun the Netherlands Government would remove themselves and continue the struggle from outside in company with the Allies. If that were so it would be to the interest of the Netherlands Government, no less than of ourselves, that they should leave behind them as little as possible in the way of military and economic

resources/

Reference:-	CAB 63/129	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	1	2
	3	4
	5	6
	7	8
	9	10
	11	12
	13	14
	15	16
	17	18
	19	20
	21	22
	23	24
	25	26
	27	28
	29	30
	31	32
	33	34
	35	36
	37	38
	39	40
	41	42
	43	44
	45	46
	47	48
	49	50
	51	52
	53	54
	55	56
	57	58
	59	60
	61	62
	63	64
	65	66
	67	68
	69	70
	71	72
	73	74
	75	76
	77	78
	79	80
	81	82
	83	84
	85	86
	87	88
	89	90
	91	92
	93	94
	95	96
	97	98
	99	100

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

resources which would be of value to Germany in the conduct of the war.

6. It is clear that if such resources are to be either removed or destroyed, this cannot be effectively improvised at the last moment, and the ideal course would be for the two Governments to concert in advance such arrangements as might be necessary to secure this end.

7. It is on the possibility of making an approach to the Netherlands Government in this sense that we wish to consult you and to receive from you at the earliest possible date an expression of your views.

8. We are aware that the Netherlands Government are anxious to avoid doing anything that might come to the ears of the German Government, and be regarded by them as a hostile act. We realize, therefore, that it is unlikely that the Netherlands Government would agree to the joint preparation of plans for destruction. It might, however, be possible for you discreetly to draw their attention to the problem presented by the danger of these assets falling into German hands in the event of a German attack. You could suggest that the Netherlands Government might consider, if they had not already done so, the possibility of themselves preparing plans to destroy such assets, or to remove at short notice

such/

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference -					
CAB 63/129					
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					

such of them as might be transportable to places of greater safety in the United Kingdom and France. You might add that His Majesty's Government would welcome such action on the part of the Netherlands Government, and would for their part gladly give all the assistance in their power to facilitate the removal, and, where removal is impossible, the destruction of such assets.

9. We should be glad to know what you think of this suggestion. In order that you may be in a position to judge of the character of the problem, I send you the following details of some of the chief items which we have in mind.
Gold Reserve and negotiable securities.

10. We believe the Netherlands Government have already removed part of their gold reserve to a place of safety, but a substantial proportion still remains. The evacuation of this bullion would be a considerable problem if it had to be undertaken in a hurry when transport facilities were disorganised. Do you think you could suggest to the Netherlands Government the desirability, as a measure of precaution, of getting this gold away in good time?

11. If the Netherlands Government are prepared to discuss the matter of gold, perhaps you could take the opportunity to raise with them also the question of negotiable securities/

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
CAB 63/129	
Reference:-	

securities, e.g. foreign investments in the shape of bearer bonds and stocks, particularly dollar securities. It is important that these valuable assets, of which the Dutch are believed to have large holdings, should not fall into the hands of Germany. They are, for the most part, not held in the Central Bank, but are probably scattered among banks and private institutions, a fact which may present difficulties. Even if the Netherlands Government are unwilling to consider moving gold or securities out of the country in advance of the emergency, they should at any rate prepare a plan for doing so at the first possible moment when the German intention to invade becomes clear. We should be prepared to co-operate if desired. And if in the last resort they should be caught without a plan, we hope that you will use your utmost endeavour to induce them to send out of the country as much as possible of the gold and securities that still remain there.

12. We are in touch with the Treasury and Bank of England on the whole question, but we should be glad to receive your views. For your own information, the Governor of the Bank of England is sending over an official on an informal visit to take soundings with his opposite number in Holland as to whether the Dutch will not take the necessary action. He is not optimistic as to the result of

this/

Reference:-	
CAB 63/129	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
1	2
3	4
5	6
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

31

this overture. It may result in a rebuff, or the Governor of the Bank of Holland may at once approach his Government, in which case we might hear something from them. The Governor is not at all hopeful about getting the gold away before an emergency. This could not be done without the fact being known, and he does not believe that the Netherlands Government would allow the Bank to take action. The point has been stressed to him that if the gold cannot be got away before an emergency, there should at least be an emergency plan, so that even if only a few hours were available the gold could be moved. This at least would be the second-best arrangement, but the best thing would be to get the gold away before an emergency arises. The securities, which are private property, would, of course, be harder to deal with than the gold, which is Government property; and the Governor seems to think it unlikely that the Netherlands Government would be willing to move them until the last moment.

Stocks of Raw Materials.

13. The most important of these is oil. Other important commodities are copper, tin, zinc cobalt, nickel, iron and steel and ferro alloys, manganese, molybdenum, wolfram, chroma, antimony, industrial diamonds, and flax (including flax seeds).

14. So far as oil is concerned, of which very large

stocks/

stocks are held in Holland, the authorities here will do what they can, through various trade channels, to secure a decrease in the stocks held by the Royal Dutch Petroleum Company, by reducing future shipments. It is unlikely that the Dutch will agree to reduce stocks by sending oil out of the country.

15. So far as other commodities are concerned, the Ministry of Economic Warfare are proposing to make a discreet approach to certain British firms having commercial interests in Holland, and to invite them to take what action they can to reduce stocks of raw materials held in the Netherlands.

16. It is desirable that stocks should be reduced to a minimum since, except in the case of oil, little can be done at the last minute in the way of destruction. Stocks of oil could, however, be destroyed or run off, and it is most important that all possible steps should be taken to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. Do you think that the Netherlands Government have this in mind, and that they have plans for the destruction of their oil stocks in the event of their having to retreat before the enemy? Do you think that an approach could be made to the Netherlands Government urging that they should prepare the necessary plans for destruction, if they have not already done so?

17./

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

17. If no such approach proves to be possible in present circumstances, it is important that you should, in the event of an invasion of Holland, take steps to secure that the Netherlands Government destroy or otherwise dispose of their stocks of oil to prevent their falling into German hands, and you should bear this in mind.

18. I would add for your own information that if the Dutch should fail to destroy their own stocks of oil, we should have to take such steps as were open to us to destroy them in our own interests, and alternative plans for this are being prepared.

Transportation.

19. The most important item from this point of view is shipping, including oil tankers, cargo ships, salvage vessels, tugs, dredgers, and river barges.

20. We believe that the Dutch are fully alive to the need of removing what they can of their mobile shipping when the time comes, and the Board of Trade have already been approached by a representative of a Dutch shipowner who asked whether 30 ships could be placed in British ports. The Board of Trade will do anything that is possible, through the British Oil Companies, to reduce the number of tankers lying in Dutch ports, and to examine other possible methods

of/

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2
3	4
5	6

of ensuring that tankers would not fall into the hands of the enemy. It is, of course, of the greatest importance that sea-going ships, especially tankers, should be safely removed from Dutch ports to ports in the United Kingdom or France at an early stage of an emergency. But obviously little can be done except in collaboration with the Netherlands Government.

21. It is also doubtful whether anything can be done in the way of salvage or demolition of tugs, barges or dredgers without the active co-operation of the Dutch Government; but we consider that their removal or destruction, preferably the former, would be a matter of importance.

22. Do you think that these are matters which could be usefully raised with the Netherlands Government now? If nothing can be said to them now, it would, of course, be essential in the event of invasion that you should at once press on them the vital necessity of taking action to remove to a safe place the vessels referred to above, and you should bear this in mind.

Locomotives, Rolling Stock and Mechanical Transport.

23. The Netherlands Government will no doubt be alive to the importance of removing or destroying railway rolling stock and mechanical transport so as to prevent it falling into/

6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

into the hands of the enemy. You may think it possible to draw their attention to this now, but in any event the point should be strongly impressed upon them in the event of invasion. Your Military Attaché is being instructed accordingly.

Machine Tools.

24. We are considering an approach to Dutch industrial interests with a view to the preparation of a plan for the removal or destruction of particular machine tools in the event of emergency. Should an emergency arise, you should urge the Netherlands Government to take steps to secure their destruction.

Aerodrome Facilities.

25. The Air Ministry are instructing your Air Attaché, in the event of invasion, to impress on the Netherlands air authorities the importance of preventing aerodrome facilities from falling into the hands of the enemy.

Aircraft and aircraft personnel.

26. The Air Ministry will also arrange through your Air Attaché for Dutch civil aircraft and aircraft personnel to be flown out in the event of invasion.

Warships and Military Aircraft.

27. The Admiralty and Air Ministry are making arrangements, through the Service Attachés, for the routing and reception/

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

reception of warships and military aircraft which might leave Holland in the event of invasion.

Warships under construction.

28. It is important that the submarines either completed or under construction in Holland should be saved or destroyed. Your Naval Attaché is being instructed, in the event of invasion, to impress upon the Dutch Naval authorities the importance of denying to the enemy the possession of these submarines and the use of such naval dockyard facilities as exist.

Dock and Harbour facilities.

29. There remains the important and very delicate question of the denial to the enemy of dock and harbour facilities. So long as the Dutch forces with their allies were holding up the enemy, it would probably be desirable that such facilities should be kept open for the use of the former. If, however, the Dutch and the Allies were driven back the moment would come when it would be essential that the necessary demolitions should be undertaken so that the use of these dock and harbour facilities should be denied to the enemy.

30. Do you think the Netherlands Government have any plan for carrying out such demolitions or that they will be willing/

Reference:-	CAB 63/129	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	6
			5
			4
			3
			2
			1

willing that we should co-operate with them in carrying them out? Do you think that these are matters on which any approach could be made to them now?

31. For your own information, the chief operation which we have in mind is the destruction of port facilities at Amsterdam, Ymuiden, Rotterdam, Hook of Holland and Flushing, and the demolition of naval dockyard facilities. We also think it desirable that coast defences, if any such exist, should be demolished.

32. I would add, also for your own information, that if the Netherlands Government failed to carry out such demolitions, we should be bound to take such steps as were open to us to carry them out ourselves, and the necessary plans are being prepared.

General.

33. You will see that in some of the above cases it may be possible for us to take action now, or to lay plans in advance without the necessity of consultation with the Netherlands Government, but in certain other cases the co-operation of the Netherlands Government is essential if the best results are to be secured.

34. The point on which we want your advice as soon as possible is whether you think any approach can be made to

the/

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

58

the Netherlands Government at all at present, and if so in what form and in respect of what subjects. Subject to the following sentence, you should not make any approach to the Netherlands Government pending further instructions. Whether or not any approach can be made now, it is essential, however, that if any sudden emergency arises and Holland is invaded, you should approach the Netherlands Government immediately without waiting for instructions, and urge them to take every step in their power to deny to the enemy all the various facilities and resources referred to above. .

The removal of the Gold Reserve and negotiable securities and the destruction of oil supplies are of especial importance. You should also inform them that we should be prepared to resist them to the best of our ability, and you should have in mind that, in the last resort, we should be bound to act in defence of our vital interests in the case of dock and harbour facilities and oil supplies. In that event the co-operation of the Netherlands authorities would be of the utmost value. Your Service Attachés will receive more detailed information than can be given in this letter and more precise instructions as to the results we desire to secure.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY

59
FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

(C 14610/15/18)

29th Septambor, 1939.

Dear Lemay,

In view of the reports which are current about the likelihood of a German attack through Holland, we should be interested to learn what importance the Chiefs of Staff attach to concerting defensive measures in advance with the Netherlands military authorities, if that were possible.

2. If in the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff such prior consultation should be regarded as a matter of great importance to us, we would consider the possibility of approaching the Netherlands Government, even though there seems little prospect of receiving a favourable reply. The Chiefs of Staff may, however, hold that as we could not help the Dutch anyhow there is no use in trying to concert measures with them.

Yours

(Sd) G.G. SARGENT.

Major-General H.L. Lemay, C.B., D.S.O.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY

SECRET

60
OFFICES OF THE WAR CABINET,
RICHMOND TERRACE, S.W.1.
30th September, 1939.

Dear Sargent,

I am sending you an interim reply to your letter of 29th September on the subject of Staff Conversations with the Dutch.

The matter was discussed by the Chiefs of Staff at their meeting this morning. Their opinion is that prior consultation with the Dutch should be regarded as a matter of great importance to us.

It is true that there could be no question of sending troops into Holland, but if we knew the Dutch plans for demolitions and inundations and their lines of retirement, we should be in a far better position to co-operate with them in the air. And there is a further point. We are at present examining the various resources in the Low Countries which it would be desirable, in the event of a German invasion, either to deny to the enemy by destruction or to save for the use of the Allies. Clearly any plans in this sphere would be far more effective if they could be worked out in close collaboration with the Dutch. We should not be in a position to start the actual conversations until this enquiry had been completed, say next week. But if you think that there is any hope of inducing the Netherlands Government to concert defence plans with us, the sooner an approach is made to them the better.

Yours ever,

(Sd) H.L. ISMAV

Sir O. Sargent, K.C.M.G., C.B.
Foreign Office.

6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
Reference:-					

61

From: BELGIUM.

Decypher. Sir R. Olive (Brusselle)
29th September, 1939.

D. 1.44 p.m. 29th September, 1939.

R. 3.30 p.m. 29th September, 1939.

No. 131.

IMMEDIATE.

SECRET.

My telegram No.130.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs handed me this morning an aide-mémoire in reply to the aide-mémoire enclosed in my despatch 697.

2. After expressing thanks for the renewed assurances and referring to the proposal for staff contacts, the aide-mémoire continues as follows:-

The preoccupations of His Majesty's Government have been examined with the fullest attention by the Belgian Government and the Belgian military authorities.

The Belgian Government is of the opinion that, in the present circumstances, there is little foundation for the hypothesis that Germany will launch an attack through Belgium.

The Belgian Government can, on the other hand, affirm that all the requisite military measures have been decided upon, and are being carried out to enable Belgium to offer a strong resistance to any attempt to violate the country by land or by air.

These menaces are such that, should the guarantor powers be called upon to assist Belgium with their forces, they could do so without fear of these forces being subjected to a surprise attack by land.

The Belgian Government consider in consequence that the opening of Staff Conversations is not called for, such conversations not being in harmony with the situation set out above.

Reference:-	PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE											
	CAB 63/129											
	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

62

29th September, 1939.

29th September, 1939.

29th September, 1939.

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET

6. /

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION

6. He said that anti-tank defences were now being erected along the whole line from Antwerp to the Meuse, regardless of cost. I referred him to what he had said to me on September 20th (as recorded in last sentence of paragraph 3 of my telegram No.105) and enquired, as a personal suggestion, whether facilities would be given by the Military Attaché discreetly to study this line of defences and to ascertain the contemplated disposition of Belgian forces. He replied that speaking as a civilian, he would at once say yes; but he would [group omitted ? ask] Minister of National Defence and let me know.

7. He summed up the Belgian attitude as follows:- the political danger - i.e. danger of Germany getting wind of Staff Conversations at a moment when, he was inclined to believe, she genuinely feared that Belgium might allow the Allies right of passage - was greater than the Military danger, in view of the strength of Belgian defences.

8. I would add Spaak is ready to take a more realistic view than the more timid Catholic and Liberal Members of the Government.

Make sure that Col. J. A. L. has
seen this.

H.

17.X.39.

63

With the compliments

of

Mr. W. Strang

SECRET

C 16598/G

FOREIGN OFFICE. S.W.I. 17th OCTOBER, 1939

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6	CAB 63/129			
1						COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION			

Reference

64

FOREIGN OFFICE. S.W.1.

17th October, 1939

C 16598/G

SECRET

Dear Admiral Binney,

As arranged at our conversation a day or two ago about the question of despatching naval officers to Belgium and Holland on reconnaissances of Belgian and Dutch ports, we telegraphed to H.M. Ambassador at Brussels and H.M. Minister at The Hague asking for their views.

2. We have now had a telegram from Sir R. Clive at Brussels, in which he says that he sees no objection and that he is quite prepared to call the officer in question his cousin and put him up if that would help. The officer could go on to Antwerp the next day, and the Ambassador could no doubt arrange with the Consul-General there to have him put up in order to avoid his going to an hotel, if that is considered undesirable.

3. Ho/

Vice-Admiral T.H. Binney, C.B., D.S.O.,
Imperial Defence College.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

Reference:-	CAB 63/129	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12

65

3. No reply has yet been received from The Hague, but I will let you know as soon as we hear from Sir Nevile Bland.

4. As regards the officer for Belgium, we think that the simplest course would be for him to carry a new passport issued to him in his own name, but without mention of his naval rank. He would be described as "of independent means" or by some other general term to indicate his profession. He would also, of course, be supplied with the necessary courier's passport.

5. If this procedure is approved by the Admiralty, I would suggest that you should get into touch with Jebb, who is Cadogan's private secretary, and arrange with him for the necessary documents to be issued.

W. SYRANG

FOREIGN OFFICE. S.W.1.

17th October, 1939

66

C 16598/G

SECRET

Dear Admiral Binney,

In continuation of my letter of to-day, I write to say that we have now heard from Sir N. Bland at The Hague.

2. So far as Amsterdam and Rotterdam are concerned, he thinks that provided no mention of active service rank is made on the passports of the officers concerned, visits could probably be arranged without arousing suspicion. Flushing is a long way from The Hague, and the Vice-Consul there is a Netherlands subject. It would therefore not be advisable for the courier to stay in the port of Flushing, but a brief visit there could be arranged in company with the Naval Attaché, the courier then returning to England from that port.

3. In view of this, we should see no objection to your

proceeding/

Vice-Admiral T.H. Binney, C.B., D.S.O.,

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

67

proceeding with the scheme for sending three naval officers to Holland for the purpose you have in mind. We would ask, however, that they should be sent at intervals of about a week.

4. If the Admiralty agree to this procedure, would you arrange about their passports with Jebb?

W. S. J. NG

CAB 63/129

Ref: 27212

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

9	5	11	13	2	1
---	---	----	----	---	---

2

Carroll
to be replaced, 69

69

[Faint handwritten notes or bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]

Puberty

reverted to Mr. Trade
~~Bill~~ + Bill of Stopping
Clark P. and Trade

176-11-1

5000

Delivered

02. Bush

217-2

Forward ^{13/12/19} Rankin to write to Find See and
Barbara. Check of 13/12/19

مجلس

Natal Pate ² Demerol 1/2 1/2

White Ford Sed. Local,

? C. O. S.

? W. W. L. L. L.

+ Medicated water.

~~Medicated water.~~

Good body into love as a back.

Preparation.

Ad E with appropriate

Hermon the eye, tests
collecting, stuff.

Brown to get ready.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
Reference:-									
CAB 63/129									
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Add'l.
~~Handkey~~
 10/10/12

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6	Reference: -			
CAB 63/129						COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION			

MOET SECRET.

72
On Saturday, October 7/40 I was asked by the War Cabinet to coordinate the action of Government departments in passing out orders giving effect to the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff Committee for the evacuation of a German invasion of Belgium and Holland. (W.P. (39), 40).
The arrangements in the attached report

are organised in the following sections which apply both to Belgium and Holland.

I
THE PRESENT STAGE - REDUCTION OF STOCKS BEFORE AN ATTACK BECOMES IMMINENT.

In this phase the object is to reduce stocks in Belgium and Holland of such things as gold, oil fuel, raw materials and the number of ships in port. Our Ambassador in Belgium has advised that we cannot hope for much co-operation by the Belgian Government in reducing stocks owing to their general attitude.

In the matter of gold he is making private enquiries with a Mr. Janssens who moved the gold from Brussels to London in 1914.

I have not yet seen a reply from our Minister in Holland on this aspect.

In the meantime we are working through less official channels.

For example, in the matter of gold, the Governor of the Bank of England has sent a private emissary to take soundings with the Governor of the Bank of Holland, and we are expecting his return at any time.

In the case of non-ferrous metals, the Ministry of Economic Warfare has arranged with the Union Minière, of which Lord Stonchoven is Vice-Chairman, to reduce their stocks.

In the case of tankers, the Shipping Department of the Board of Trade (now being transferred to the Ministry of Shipping) have arranged

3A

W.P. (39) 6

W.P. (39) 40

2. I attach herewith a progress report, showing the action already taken with a view to reducing the assets which Germany would be likely to acquire by a successful invasion of either of these countries, and the action arranged to be taken in the event of the outbreak of hostilities.

The following is a summary of the position with the information of the War Cabinet.

My first step, after taking stock of the situation was to produce a progress arrange with



PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

73

with Sir Andrew Agnew to do all he can to secure that there shall be as few tankers as possible in Holland, and to arrange to get them away in an emergency.

II PLAN FOR EMERGENCY - ALSO IN THE PRESENT STAGE.

As a second line of defence, so to speak, we are trying to induce the Belgians and Dutch, even if they are not willing to make actual physical preparations by reducing stocks at the present time, at least to prepare plans so that in the event of a sudden invasion of their territory, property of value to the enemy shall be removed.

These arrangements are being made through a number of channels, e.g. through the British Ambassador at Brussels and the Minister at the Hague and their respective staffs so far as may be practicable, and, in addition, through private channels.

For example, in the case of gold, the Ambassador at Brussels, as already mentioned, is making private enquiries with Mr. Janssens.

The Governor of the Bank was requested to ask his emissary to suggest to the Governor of the Bank of Holland that preparations should be made now.

Note: It is very important that plans should be made for a sudden emergency in this matter. Probably, for example, the safes of treasure vaults have two keys, both of which have to be used simultaneously. Unless the presence of the custodians of both the keys is available the vaults will never be opened. The transport of the gold also requires to be thought out. In the case of Belgium it would perhaps best be sent by train to France; in the case of Holland by sea.

His Majesty's representatives in Brussels and the Hague respectively, with the assistance of their Service Attachés, are to try and induce the Belgian and Dutch Governments to make other plans, e.g. for preventing stocks of oil, dock and harbour facilities, naval and ship building facilities.

Reference:-	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10

particularly submarines under construction,
 from falling into German hands;
 to remove or destroy rolling stock, and
 particularly locomotives, and as much mechanical
 transport as possible;
 to remove or destroy shipping resources;
 to remove all aircraft, civil and military,
 and trained personnel to France or England before
 it is too late, and to destroy all aerodrome
 facilities;
 to remove to allied countries, or to destroy,
 certain machine tools, lists of which have
 been forwarded to His Majesty's representatives
 by the Foreign Office;
 to include Power Stations in their general
 demolition plans.

So far as shipping is concerned, the Board
 of Trade report that the Dutch shipowners are fully
 alive to the importance of getting their ships away
 from Holland in time. One Dutch owner has actually
 made enquiries.

III

PLANS BY THE SERVICE DEPARTMENTS.

It may well prove impossible to induce the
 Belgian and Dutch authorities to make any plans of
 their own, or to communicate them to us. Consequently
 plans have been drawn up by the Service Departments
 which can be put into operation at short notice to
 secure our own vital interests, e.g. British destroyers
 will be sent to Ymuiden, Flushing, Hook of Holland
 and Antwerp to carry out local demolitions of harbour
 and dock facilities and coast defences. A Captain-in-
 Charge has been detailed for each port, working
 together under a Vice-Admiral. The personnel has
 been selected and training is in progress.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

75

Preparations will be complete by Friday, the 20th October.

In addition, the War Office have secured all information and prepared a plan for the destruction of the main oil stocks in Holland and Belgium for execution if occasion offers. The parties required, if available, will go with the Naval parties mentioned above; details of the plan are in the possession of the Military Attachée.

In addition to the above, the Admiralty have prepared a plan for blocking Ostend and Zeebrugge and for local demolitions. The plan has been prepared and the Naval Attaché in Belgium is being informed of the details. Arrangements have been made with the Air Ministry for co-operation in the form of air protection.

His Majesty's representatives in Belgium and Holland have been informed of this plan and have been instructed, if the emergency should arise, to secure the co-operation of the Governments concerned.

Arrangements have been made with the French Military Authorities to undertake the demolition of the docks at Bruges and Ghent in the case of a German invasion of Belgium.

The Admiralty have prepared a plan for disconnecting all cables from Holland and Belgium if and when the emergency arises.

All the above arrangements have been concerted with the French through the Military representatives to the Supreme War Council.

IV.

ACTION IN EMERGENCY.

Should the invasion of Belgium, or Holland, or both, take place by Germany, the following action

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

76

action will be required to set the scheme in operation:-

(1) A decision by the War Cabinet to put the whole scheme in operation.

(2) A decision by the War Cabinet ^{as} to authorise the Admiralty to take the following action:-

(a) If Belgium is invaded to despatch the block ships to Ostend and Zeebrugge.

(b) As to whether the Senior Naval Officers at Zeebrugge and Ostend respectively are to have a free hand to decide the moment at which the ports are to be blocked; or alternatively as to whether they must receive a separate authorisation from the Admiralty *when they think the moment has come.*

(c) In the latter event, as to whether the Admiralty can act on their own authority, or should have a decision from the War Cabinet.

(3) In the case of an invasion of Holland, a decision by the War Cabinet as to whether the destroyers are to be despatched.

(4) If the War Office are prepared to implement their plan for the destruction of the main oil stocks in Holland and Belgium, a decision by the War Cabinet as to whether the Army detachments are to be sent.

(5) ~~If the above are sanctioned by the War Cabinet in whole or in part, an appropriate telegram to be sent by the Foreign Office to~~

His Majesty's Ambassador in Brussels and/or

the British Minister at the Hague *to be informed by the S - A & - for Foreign Affairs of the decision of the*

(6) A decision at the appropriate moment empowering the Admiralty to disconnect cables between this country and Belgium and/or Holland respectively.

I myself consider that direction should be left to the First Lord of the Admiralty, on the understanding that he will consult the Prime Minister if time permits.

War Cabinet and instructed to take the pre-arranged action.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY

77

SECRET

IMPERIAL DEFENCE COLLEGE,

9, Buckingham Gate,

S.W.1.

19th October, 1939.

Dear Jacob,

Will you please let Lord Hankey know that the First Lord and the Foreign Office have now agreed to let my Captains go over to Holland and Belgium. The only stipulation being that the three to Holland should go at intervals of about a week. They are to travel with courier passports but without Naval rank.

The first two, one to visit Antwerp and one Rotterdam, are leaving as soon as their passports and passages can be arranged.

I think this is satisfactory.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) T.H. Binney.

Lieut.-Colonel E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
Committee of Imperial Defence,
Richmond Terrace,
Whitehall,
S.W.1.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

BELGIAN BARGES.

78

This question was discussed in confidence with Mr. Privott of the General Steam Navigation Company, and the following information has been elicited:-

(1) Belgian barges are generally of 100-500 tons dead-weight. A few are self-propelled but could not go to sea. Their speed is very slow. *They are covered thousands*

(2) There are several of them. A good many of them will be found at any one time at Antwerp and other ports in Belgium. At the present time most ^{at} of these ports will be empty owing to lack of trade. There will also be a very considerable number scattered on the canals and rivers inland. It is not possible to estimate how many.

(3) There are a few locks on the canals. The barges are towed by horse, or more frequently by man power, except a comparatively few self-propelled ones.

(4) To tow the barges from an inland town like Liege to Antwerp would take three to five days; off the main canals it would be still slower.

(5) Organised plans to bring inland barges to the coast would be difficult to make. The barges are mostly in private hands, but it was thought that there would be two or three chartering Agents who might, if necessary be able to make rapid plans in an emergency with owners. Mr. Privott promised to find out, without risk of disclosure, who these firms are.

(6) As regards getting the barges away, if they could be got down to Antwerp or other ports Mr. Privott said that ships could tow up to six barges at a time, the barges being lashed together in pairs. He thought that most ships would have tow ropes, or could use their cargo runners for towage. Their crane wires could be used to lash the barges together. Serious risks would be taken but he thought that was the utmost that ships could undertake. This might enable a considerable number of barges in an emergency to be brought

away from Antwerp and other ports in Belgium.

(7) As regards the possibility of purchasing barges now, he thought little could be done but he undertook to make enquiries from commercial sources without risk of disclosure.

W. G. H.

Sir Julian Foley.

20th October, 1939.

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

MOST SECRET.

80
20th October, 1939.

My dear Jacob,

I enclose my first draft of a note to the Cabinet on the Belgian/Dutch question. Unfortunately I do not seem to have copies of the letters from the Ambassador at Brussels and the Minister at The Hague, so I may have overlooked something.

I should be very much obliged if you would vet the note, which will cover the latest edition of your Progress Report.

Yours sincerely,

Lieut.-Colonel E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
Offices of the War Cabinet.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference:-
CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

~~SECRET~~

81

On Saturday, October 7th, (War Cabinet 40(39) Conclusion 6), I was asked by the War Cabinet to co-ordinate the preparations and action of Government Departments in giving effect to the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff Committee for the eventuality of a German invasion of Belgium and/or Holland (W.P.(39) 90).

2. A Progress Report is attached herewith which shows the action already taken with a view to reducing some of the useful assets which Germany would be likely to acquire by an occupation of either of these countries, as well as the further action which would be taken so far as circumstances permit if the emergency should arise.

3. After taking stock of the situation in a preliminary way I arranged with the Foreign Office to communicate with His Majesty's Ambassador at Brussels and His Majesty's Minister at The Hague explaining the position in this matter, giving them certain instructions and asking their advice as to whether any approach can be made to the respective Governments, and if so, in what form and on what subjects. These letters were sent on October 12th. In neither country did our representative think it advisable to take up the question on a diplomatic footing at the present stage. Both the Belgian and Dutch Governments, as the War Cabinet are aware, refuse officially to admit that they are in any immediate danger of attack, notwithstanding that they have large forces on a war footing for that very contingency. The real truth seems to be that they are terrified of taking any action which might be used by Germany as a pretext for a breach of their undertaking to leave these countries alone. Nevertheless, our diplomatic representatives may be able to effect a certain amount through their Naval, Military and Commercial Attachés.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

82

4. As will be seen from the attached Report, and from the summary of it in the following paragraphs, it has been possible one way or another to prepare a fairly comprehensive scheme.

5. In this present phase, apart from making plans for the emergency under consideration, the main object of our arrangements is to reduce stocks in Belgium and Holland of such things as gold, oil fuel and other raw materials and the number of ships in port. In the absence of co-operation by the Belgian and Dutch Governments we can only work through private channels, but even so, something has been accomplished.

GOLD.

6. The Belgian Government has already reduced its stocks in Brussels to about £45 millions. The British Ambassador has not thought it expedient, for reasons already given, to approach the Belgian Government on the subject at the present stage either with a view to an immediate reduction of gold stocks or to the preparation of a plan. He is, however, in touch with a Mr. Jenseens, who moved the Belgian gold from Brussels to London in 1914. It is to be hoped that this will result in some preparations being made for the removal of the gold in an emergency. The Ambassador has been instructed, however, that if, in the last resort, the Belgian Government should be caught without a plan, he is to use his utmost endeavour to induce them to send out of the country as much as possible of the gold and securities that still remain there.

7. Similar instructions were sent to the British Minister in Holland, but in this country progress has been made so far as gold and foreign securities are concerned through another channel.

8. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was good enough to see the Governor of the Bank of England in my presence and arranged with him that he should send an emissary to sound the Governor of the Nederlandsche Bank as to what they were doing. This emissary

6	6	2	1
5	5	1	1
4	4	1	1
3	3	1	1
2	2	1	1
1	1	1	1

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

84

OIL.

11. The Ministry of Economic Warfare reports that there are 600,000 tons in Holland, but consultations with the Shell Company indicate little chance of getting any of this removed in time of peace. The Dutch experts consider that all stocks could be destroyed at short notice. A Managing Director of the Royal Dutch has left for Holland and will try to find out whether the Dutch Government have made any plans to destroy the oil in an emergency. From the list annexed to this report it will be seen that if the emergency arises His Majesty's Representatives in Belgium and Holland are to impress on the Governments the urgent need of action to destroy the oil stocks, or failing such action, to co-operate in demolition plans which are being worked out in detail between the War Office and Admiralty. Plans are also being worked out by the Air Ministry for the destruction by air of the main oil stocks in Belgium and Holland by aerial bombardment for possible execution if all other means fail.

12. From the above it will be seen, therefore, that the plans for the destruction of the oil are threefold. First by the Belgian and Dutch authorities with or without British co-operation; second by the War Office, whose personnel would be taken over by the Admiralty in destroyers (see below); and third, in the last resort, by the Royal Air Force. Stocks of oil at Zeebrugge would be dealt with by Naval blocking parties (see below) and at Ghent and Bruges by the French.

13. The necessary information on these matters is in the possession of the Military Attachés at Brussels and at The Hague so that, under the authority of the Ambassador or Minister respectively, they can try and arrange co-operation with the Dutch and Belgians.

WHALE OIL.

14. There are 29,000 tons of whale oil which belongs to us in Holland. Efforts are being made through His Majesty's

Reference:-	CAB 63/129				
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
1	2	3	3	5	6

85

Minister to secure the release of this oil in return for delivery, in instalments, of an equivalent amount to Holland by us.

DOCK AND HARBOUR FACILITIES.

15. The arrangements made include plans for preventing dock and harbour facilities so far as practicable from falling into German hands. These vary very considerably at the different ports, but pending further information which we are obtaining, I am unable to say whether they will be worth putting in execution except at Zeebrugge and Ostend.

16. In the case of the Dutch ports and Antwerp, for example, His Majesty's Representatives will do what they can to try and induce the Government concerned to make plans with this object.

17. In case the Governments do not take any action, however, British plans are being prepared and in some cases are well advanced.

18. For example, plans have been worked out and preparations completed for sending British destroyers to Ymuiden (for Amsterdam), Flushing, Hook of Holland and Antwerp to carry out local demolitions of harbour and dock facilities and coast defences. Arrangements have been made between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office for the officers concerned to visit these ports. Certain reconnaissances have also been completed under War Office authority.

19. In the case of Ostend and Zeebrugge, the Admiralty have made more definite plans and preparations. Block ships have been prepared; personnel has been selected, and training is proceeding. Discussions with a view to French co-operation are in progress. The signal arrangements are complete. Air protection has been arranged with the Air Ministry. Everything is ready, therefore, for the blocking of these harbours in case of necessity.

1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

56

ROLLING STOCK.

20. With a view to the removal or destruction of Belgian rolling stock, and particularly heavy locomotives which are of great importance, the French have been approached through the permanent Military Representatives. The French representatives have accepted the responsibility and passed the matter on to Paris.

21. In addition, His Majesty's Representatives in Belgium and Holland have been asked, in an emergency, to impress on those Governments the importance of removing or destroying rolling stock and particularly locomotives. This latter provision applies also in respect of mechanical transport. His Majesty's Representatives in Holland have also been asked to impress on the Government the importance of preventing naval and shipbuilding facilities, and particularly submarines under construction, from falling into the hands of the Germans. The Naval Attaché is in possession of details.

CABLES.

22. The Admiralty have prepared a plan for disconnecting all cables from Holland and Belgium at the appropriate moment.

SHIPPING. INCLUDING TANKERS.

23. The Board of Trade have taken action in respect of shipping. They report that the Dutch are fully alive to the desirability of getting tankers into safety. Action has been taken through Sir Andrew Agnew, who will do all he can to further our objects.

24. Some weeks ago a Dutch shipowner made enquiries from the Board of Trade as to whether accommodation could be found for his ships in this country in the event of a war emergency. Conversations are proceeding between the Board of Trade and a representative of Dutch cargo shipowners to make arrangements for ships to take refuge in British ports in an emergency.

Public Reading Office

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

1	2	3	5	5	5
1	1	1	1	1	1

87
25. In Belgium the Consul-General at Antwerp has been told to make discreet enquiries of companies concerned as to what provision is being made for removal of shipping in case of an emergency.

26. The Admiralty are including in their other plans arrangements for the destruction of dredgers, tugs, etc., in an emergency.

27. The War Office consider it important to secure the removal of barges from Belgian rivers and canals and particularly out of the river Scheldt, upon which the army relies as an obstacle to a German advance. They have approached the Board of Trade with a view to the purchase of Belgian barges on a large scale so as to move them over to the United Kingdom before the emergency arises. The Military Attaché in Brussels has been asked by the War Office to try and induce the Belgian Military Authorities to arrange for the Scheldt to be kept clear of barges.

AIRCRAFT AND AERODROMES.

28. An Air Mission will be sent to Belgium in an emergency which, together with the Air Attachés in Belgium and Holland, will take all possible steps to ensure that the Dutch and Belgian authorities remove all aircraft, civil and military, and trained personnel before it is too late, and destroy all aerodrome facilities. The Air Attachés have been instructed on this subject and as to the evacuation of aircraft of civil operating companies and technical personnel. The question of the disposal of military aircraft is under discussion with the French.

MACHINE TOOLS.

29. Lists of the types of equipment which it would be most desirable to remove or destroy have been obtained from the Ministry of Supply and forwarded to the Foreign Office for communication to His Majesty's Representatives in Belgium and

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE										CAB 63/129										COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION																																																																															
Reference:-																																																																																																			

Holland, who are being instructed to impress on the Governments the importance of preventing these tools from falling into enemy hands intact. They will take this matter up the moment an emergency arises, if not before.

POWER STATIONS.

30. If His Majesty's Representatives think such a course desirable, the Military Attachés in Belgium and Holland are to draw the attention of the staffs to the importance of including Power Stations in the general demolition plans.

ACTION IN AN EMERGENCY.

31. Should an invasion by Germany of Belgium or Holland or both take place the following action will be required to set the scheme in motion:-

- (1) A decision by the War Cabinet to put the whole scheme in operation.
- (2) Decisions by the War Cabinet -
 - (a) to authorise the Admiralty, if Belgium is invaded, to despatch block ships to Ostend and Zeebrugge;
 - (b) as to whether the Senior Naval Officers at Zeebrugge and Ostend respectively are to have a free hand to decide the moment at which the ports are to be blocked; or alternatively, as to whether they must seek a separate authorisation from the Admiralty when they think the moment has come;
 - (c) in the latter event, as to whether the Admiralty can act on their own authority, or should have a decision from the War Cabinet. I myself consider that discretion should be left to the First Lord of the Admiralty, on the understanding that he will consult the Prime Minister if time permits.
- (3) In the case of an invasion of Holland, a decision by the War Cabinet as to whether the destroyers are to be despatched.
- (4) If the War Office are prepared to implement their plan for the destruction of the main oil stocks in Holland and Belgium, a decision by the War Cabinet as to whether the Army detachments are to be sent.
- (5) His Majesty's Ambassador in Brussels and/or the British Minister at The Hague to be informed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the decision of the War Cabinet and instructed to take the pre-arranged action.

6
5
4
3
2
1

1
2
3
4
5
6

1
2
3
4
5
6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

REFERENCE:-

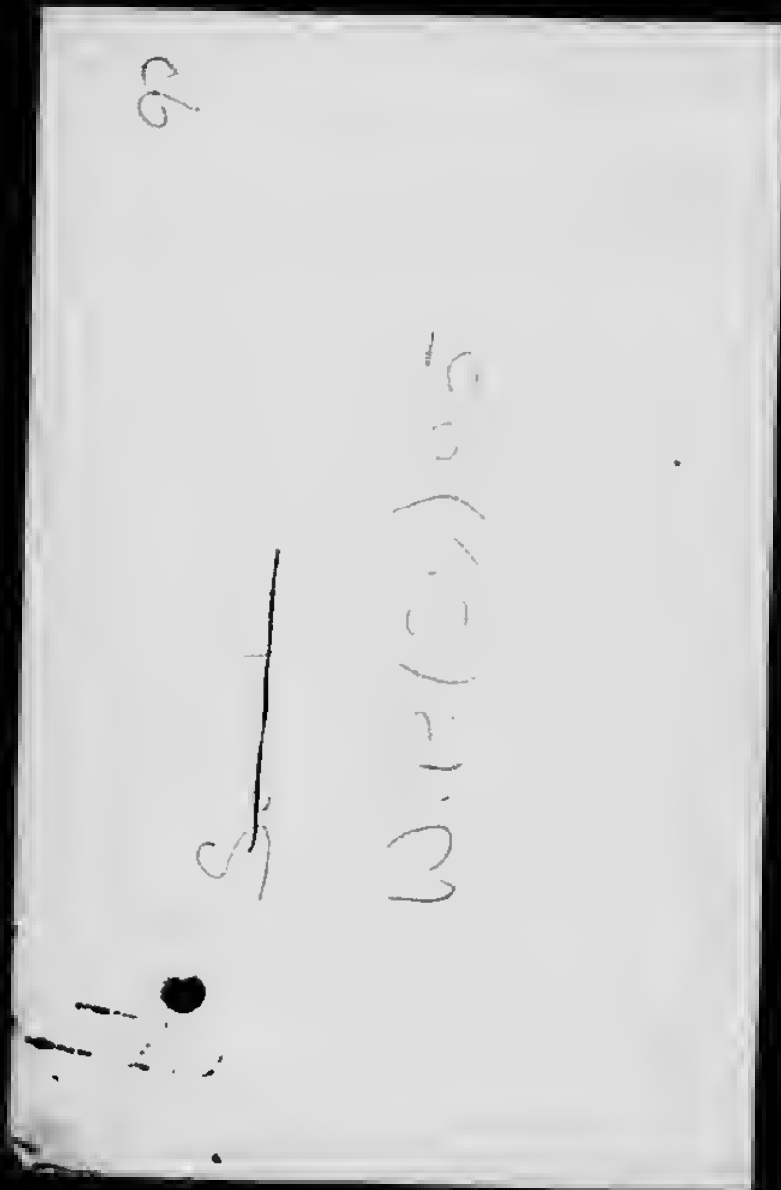
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

- (6) A decision at the appropriate moment empowering the Admiralty to disconnect cables between this country and Belgium and/or Holland respectively.

32. I should be glad of authority to arrange for the communication of these arrangements to the French authorities. I think that the safest channel would be through the Naval, Military and Air liaison systems, but perhaps the Chiefs of Staff Committee could be authorised to concert the necessary arrangements. In any event I would propose in any such communication to refer only very briefly to the fact that arrangements are being made through the proper channels for the reduction and removal of gold supplies.

33. A specimen copy of the _____ edition of the periodical Progress Report showing the state of progress on _____ is attached herewith.

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE CAB 63/129 COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION Reference:-	



COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
CAB 63/129									
Reference:-									
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

BUREAU RECORD OFFICE																							
CAB 63/129																							
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION																							
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td> </tr> </table>												1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6																		
1	2	3	4	5	6																		

91

(1) Jacob

(i) 10-4, 1 Feb

Jacob

10 Feb 1

(ii) N

10-4 1 Feb

10-4 1 Feb

10-4 1 Feb

This Document etc. Harker
Lord Harker
Wants to be a Cabinet
before report is called.
War Cabinet
92
Copy No
MOST SECRET.

W.P.(39) 95

Memorandum by the Minister without Portfolio
On Saturday, October 7th, (War Cabinet 40(39))

Conclusion 6), I was asked by the War Cabinet to co-ordinate the preparations and action of Government Departments in giving effect to the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff Committee for the eventuality of a German invasion of Belgium and/or Holland (W.P.(39) 90).

Belgium and Holland:
Measures to be taken in the event of an invasion by Germany
2. A Progress Report is attached herewith which shows the action already taken with a view to reducing some of the useful assets which Germany would be likely to acquire by an occupation of either of these countries, as well as the further action which would be taken so far as circumstances permit if the emergency should arise.

3. After taking stock of the situation in a preliminary way I arranged with the Foreign Office to communicate with His Majesty's Ambassador at Brussels and His Majesty's Minister at The Hague explaining the position in this matter, giving them certain instructions and asking their advice as to whether any approach ~~can~~ be made to the respective Governments, and if so, in what form and on what subjects. These letters were sent on October 12th. In neither country did our representative think it advisable to take up the question on a diplomatic footing at the present stage. Both the Belgian and Dutch Governments, as the War Cabinet are aware, refuse officially to admit that they are in any immediate danger of attack, notwithstanding that they have large forces on a war footing for that very contingency. The real truth seems to be that they are terrified of taking any action which might be used by Germany as a pretext for a breach of their undertaking to leave these countries alone. Nevertheless, our diplomatic representatives may be able to effect a certain amount through their ~~Secret~~ Military and Commercial Attachés.

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

93

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference:-

-2-

has now returned and reports that since February, 1939, the Nederlandsche Bank has held outside Holland 60% of its total gold stock, or approximately £110 millions out of a total of £185 millions. The amount remaining in Holland, therefore, is only £75 millions as compared with a figure of £110 millions as stated in the annex to the Chiefs of Staff Report. The Governor of the Nederlandsche Bank is anxious to export a further £40 millions, which would leave only 20% of the gold stock at home. Shipment would be first to London and afterwards to the United States of America. The Governor was impressed himself by the urgency of the question but did not expect a decision by the Dutch Government for a week or two. He was anxious, by the way, that the fact of a special visit to him should not be made known through diplomatic channels. Referring to foreign securities he added that the big Dutch companies appeared to have taken adequate steps on their own initiative to safeguard their holdings. As to other holdings of foreign securities, he said that the Government have for the time being abstained from taking emergency measures which they feel might adversely affect public confidence.

9. That, in summary, is how the question of gold stands at the present moment. It is a good deal less unsatisfactory than when we began to move. Now that the authorities concerned have been put on their guard we may hope that stocks may be still further reduced and that prompt action may be taken in an emergency.

NON-FERREOUS METALS.

10. The Minister of Economic Warfare has ascertained that stocks in Holland and Belgium are not large. ~~He reports that the Belgian authorities are anxious to transfer their stocks to this country and action is proceeding.~~ Belgian and Dutch refineries and smelters will probably be closed down and ores will be treated abroad.

The only problem in this field is copper, of which a considerable amount passes into Belgium, some for -3- re-export to Germany. The Ministry of Economic Warfare are taking action to reduce this stock and report.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129									
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION										

OIL.

11. The Ministry of Economic Warfare reports that there are 600,000 tons in Holland, but consultations with the Shell Company indicate little chance of getting any of this removed in time of peace. The Dutch experts consider that all stocks could be destroyed at short notice. A Managing Director of the Royal Dutch has left for Holland and will try to find out whether the Dutch Government have made any plans to destroy the oil in an emergency. From the list annexed to this report it will be seen that if the emergency arises His Majesty's Representatives in Belgium and Holland are to impress on the Governments the urgent need of action to destroy the oil stocks, or failing such action, to co-operate in demolition plans which are being worked out in detail between the War Office and Admiralty. Plans are also being worked out by the Air Ministry for the destruction by air of the main oil stocks in Belgium and Holland by aerial bombardment for possible execution if all other means fail.

12. From the above it will be seen, therefore, that the plans for the destruction of the oil are threefold. First by the Belgian and Dutch authorities with or without British co-operation; second by the War Office, whose personnel would be taken over by the Admiralty in destroyers (see below); and third, in the last resort, by the Royal Air Force. Stocks of oil at Zeebrugge would be dealt with by Naval blocking parties (see below) and at Ghent and Bruges by the French.

13. The necessary information on these matters is in the possession of the Military Attachés at Brussels and at The Hague so that, under the authority of the Ambassador or Minister respectively, they can try and arrange co-operation with the Dutch and Belgians.

WHALE OIL.

14. There are 29,000 tons of whale oil which belongs to us in Holland. Efforts are being made through His Majesty's

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC REFERENCE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
References:-					

Minister to secure the release of this oil in return for delivery, in instalments, of an equivalent amount to Holland by us.

DOCK AND HARBOUR FACILITIES.

15. The arrangements made include plans for preventing dock and harbour facilities so far as practicable from falling into German hands. These vary very considerably at the different ports, but pending further information which we are obtaining, I am unable to say whether they will be worth putting in execution except at Zeebrugge and Ostend.

16. In the case of the Dutch ports and Antwerp, for example, His Majesty's Representatives will do what they can to try and induce the Government concerned to make plans with this object.

17. In case the Governments do not take any action, however, British plans are being prepared and in some cases are well advanced.

18. For example, plans have been worked out and preparations completed for sending British destroyers to Ymuiden (for Amsterdam), Flushing, Hook of Holland and Antwerp to carry out local demolitions of harbour and dock facilities and coast defences. Arrangements have been made between the Admiralty and the Foreign Office for the officers concerned to visit these ports. Certain reconnaissances have also been completed under War Office authority.

19. In the case of Ostend and Zeebrugge, the Admiralty have made more definite plans and preparations. Block ships have been prepared; personnel has been selected, and training is proceeding. Discussions with a view to French co-operation are in progress. The signal arrangements are complete. Air protection has been arranged with the Air Ministry. Everything is ready, therefore, for the blocking of these harbours in case of necessity.

The responsibility for deciding the moment when the blockships are to be despatched rests with the Admiralty, whom and the First Lord will obtain a decision e.g. from the Prime Minister & War Cabinet according to circumstances. The responsibility for ordering the ports to be blocked will rest with the Commander-in-Chief of the French army of the North-East (General Georges), who, it is assumed

will have the fullest knowledge of the military situation in Belgium. Four alternative lines of communication from General Georges' Headquarters to the Admiralty are being considered. The blockships are available. In the last resort however, the naval officers in the port might have to act on their responsibility and should be empowered accordingly.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

97

ROLLING STOCK.

20. With a view to the removal or destruction of Belgian rolling stock, and particularly heavy locomotives which are of great importance, the French have been approached through the permanent Military Representatives. The French representatives have accepted the responsibility and passed the matter on to Paris.

21. In addition, His Majesty's Representatives in Belgium and Holland have been asked, in an emergency, to impress on these Governments the importance of removing or destroying rolling stock and particularly locomotives. This latter provision applies also in respect of mechanical transport. His Majesty's Representatives in Holland have also been asked to impress on the Government the importance of preventing naval and shipbuilding facilities, and particularly submarines under construction, from falling into the hands of the Germans. The Naval Attaché is in possession of details.

CABLES.

22. The Admiralty have prepared a plan for disconnecting all cables from Holland and Belgium at the appropriate moment.

SHIPPING, INCLUDING TANKERS.

23. The Board of Trade have taken action in respect of shipping. They report that the Dutch are fully alive to the desirability of getting tankers into safety. Action has been taken through Sir Andrew Agnew, who will do all he can to further our objects.

24. Some weeks ago a Dutch shipowner made enquiries from the Board of Trade as to whether accommodation could be found for his ships in this country in the event of a war emergency. Conversations are proceeding between the Board of Trade and a representative of Dutch cargo shipowners to make arrangements for ships to take refuge in British ports in an emergency.

1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

25. In Belgium the Consul-General at Antwerp has been told to make discreet enquiries of companies concerned as to what provision is being made for removal of shipping in case of an emergency.

26. The Admiralty are including in their other plans arrangements for the destruction of dredgers, tugs, etc., in an emergency.

27. The War Office consider it important to secure the removal of barges from Belgian rivers and canals and particularly out of the river Scheldt, upon which the army relies as an obstacle to a German advance. They have approached the Board of Trade with a view to the purchase of Belgian barges on a large scale so as to move them over to the United Kingdom before the emergency arises. The Military Attaché in Brussels has been asked by the War Office to try and induce the Belgian Military Authorities to arrange for the Scheldt to be kept clear of barges.

AIRCRAFT AND AERODROMES.

28. An Air Mission will be sent to Belgium in an emergency which, together with the Air Attachés in Belgium and Holland, will take all possible steps to ensure that the Dutch and Belgian authorities remove all aircraft, civil and military, and trained personnel before it is too late, and destroy all aerodrome facilities. The Air Attachés have been instructed on this subject and as to the evacuation of aircraft of civil operating companies and technical personnel. The question of the disposal of military aircraft is under discussion with the French.

MACHINE TOOLS.

29. Lists of the types of equipment which it would be most desirable to remove or destroy have been obtained from the Ministry of Supply and forwarded to the Foreign Office for communication to His Majesty's Representatives in Belgium and

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
PUBLIC RELATIONS	

Holland, who are being instructed to impress on the Governments the importance of preventing these tools from falling into enemy hands intact. They will take this matter up the moment an emergency arises, if not before.

POWER STATIONS.

30. If His Majesty's Representatives think such a course desirable, the Military Attachés in Belgium and Holland are to draw the attention of the staffs to the importance of including Power Stations in the general demolition plans.

ACTION IN AN EMERGENCY.

31. Should an invasion by Germany of Belgium or Holland, or both, take place the following action will be required to set the scheme in motion:-

- (1) A decision by the War Cabinet to put the whole scheme in operation.
- (2) ~~A~~ decisions by the War Cabinet
 - ~~(a) to authorise the Admiralty, if Belgium is invaded, to despatch block ships to Ostend and Zeebrugge;~~
 - ~~(b) as to whether the Senior Naval Officers at Zeebrugge and Ostend respectively are to have a free hand to decide the moment at which the ports are to be blocked; or alternatively, as to whether they must seek a separate authorisation from the Admiralty when they think the moment has come;~~
 - ~~(c) in the latter event, as to whether the Admiralty can act on their own authority, or should have a decision from the War Cabinet. I myself consider that discretion should be left to the First Lord of the Admiralty, on the understanding that he will consult the Prime Minister if time permits.~~
- (3) In the case of an invasion of Holland, a decision by the War Cabinet as to whether the destroyers are to be despatched.
- (4) If the War Office are prepared to implement their plan for the destruction of the main oil stocks in Holland and Belgium, a decision by the War Cabinet as to whether the Army detachments are to be sent ~~in the destroyers.~~
- (5) His Majesty's Ambassador in Brussels and/or the British Minister at The Hague to be informed by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the decision of the War Cabinet and instructed to take the pre-arranged action.

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Public Record Office

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

- (6) A decision at the appropriate moment empowering the Admiralty to disconnect cables between this country and Belgium and/or Holland respectively.

32. I should be glad of authority to arrange for the communication of these arrangements to the French authorities. I think that the safest channel would be through the Naval, Military and Air liaison systems, but perhaps the Chiefs of Staff Committee could be authorised to concert the necessary arrangements. In any event I would propose in any such communication to refer only very briefly to the fact that arrangements are being made through the proper channels for the reduction and removal of gold supplies.

33. A specimen copy of the *fourth* edition of the periodical Progress Report showing the state of progress on 21 October 1939 is attached herewith.

Lord Hawkeley's signature

*Richmond Tenace Smt
21st October 1939*

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Belgium-Holland file

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1. 101

21st October, 1939.

C 17013/G

SECRET

Daar Jacob,

I send you a copy of a letter dated October 17th to Cadogan from Oliva, in reply to the former's letter of October 12th, in which he reports the result of the enquiries he has made of the Governor of the National Bank of Belgium and of the Governor of the Société Générale respectively, as regards the gold reserve and negotiable securities.

2. I have sent a copy of this letter and its enclosure to Phillips at the Treasury.

*Yours sincerely,
W. Stanger*

Colonel E.I.C. Jacob,

Committee of Imperial Defence.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Copy.

102
British Embassy.

Brussels.

October 17th, 1939.

SECRET

Dear Cadogan,

Your secret letter of October 12th, paragraphs 7 - 9,
and my telegram No. 146 of October 14th.

Gold and Negotiable Securities.

Gold. The Governor of the National Bank told me today
that the greater part of the Belgian gold was in England, a
part in New York, and only a small part still in Belgium.

From the Governor of the Société Générale I learnt that
one third was in New York. The "greater" part ^{might} therefore
represent one half, leaving one sixth in Belgium.

The Governor of the National Bank, who was not very
forthcoming, told me after a certain amount of questioning
that the gold in Belgium was not in Brussels nor in Antwerp,
but at some place not very far from the coast. This might
be Bruges or Ostend.

Negotiable Securities. The Governor of the Société Générale
told me that all such securities in their possession had
been photographed, and copies deposited in New York, Bradford
(England) and Saumur.

This would constitute proof that these securities were
held by the Société Générale in case with the authority of the
Belgian Government the original securities had to be destroyed,
or in case they were destroyed by the action of the German
Government.

No special precautions have been taken for safeguarding
securities in the possession of the National Bank, though the
Governor gave me to understand that he was fully alive to the
necessity of preventing them falling into German hands.

Yours

(Sd.) R.H.Clive.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Belgium - Holland - ~~London~~ File ✓

-SECRET-

Reference No. 14/31/116.

22nd October, 1939.

Dear Lord Hankey

The following are the various alternative methods of communication between the French Army and Admiral Lyster at Zeebrugge and Ostend:-

- (i) Two British wireless sets are at the Headquarters of the 16th French Corps, which is on the left of the British. These sets are in direct touch with the ships at each port.
- (ii) The same two wireless sets are in touch with G.H.Q., B.E.F., who will relay message via the War Office to the Admiralty, who will convey the message to the ships.
- (iii) The same as (ii) except that a land line or despatch rider might be used between the 16th French Corps and G.H.Q., B.E.F.
- (iv) Motor bicycle posts put out by Admiral Lyster, which will give warning of any unexpected approach of the enemy.

It will be seen from the above that although the authority for the blowing of the charges, and the sinking of the ships is derived from General Georges, the executive order will be given by the 16th French Corps behind whose sector the ports lie.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

Y. Hankey

P. Lyster

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

124

Great St. Helen's

Temporary address;
Lensbury,
Broom Rd.,
Teddington,
Midx.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL.

Further to my letter of the 25rd instant, I

Yours sincerely,

cc Major Morton
Mr. Owen.

Reference:-									
CAB 63/129									
PUBLIC REWARD OFFICE									
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> <div>3</div> <div>4</div> <div>5</div> <div>6</div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div>1</div> <div>2</div> </div>									
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									

C O P Y.

135

23rd October, 1939.

Sir George Mounsey, K.C.M.G., C.B., O.B.E.,
Ministry of Economic Warfare,
Houghton Street,
ALDWYCH.

Dear Sir George,

May I once more refer to my letter of the 12th October - under "secondly", which dealt with possible steps taken by the Governments of Belgium and the Netherlands to destroy stocks of petroleum products in the event of an emergency.

I have already advised you that, as far as our company is concerned, it was our view that it would be possible to destroy all stocks, or substantially all stocks within the time limit mentioned by you. Mr. Kessler has now returned from Holland and has ascertained that, in fact, the Dutch military authorities have made all plans to destroy stocks of petroleum products completely and that they are satisfied that this can be done in a question of hours. We did not put the same limit of time to them that you mentioned to me, but it was obvious from the advice given that they have made their plans to destroy stocks well within that limit.

As regards Belgium, our representative from that country was over here towards the end of last week. Here again, of course, we did not disclose the object of our enquiry, but he informed us that he did not know of any plans by the military authorities. However, we gave him the enclosed memorandum as a guide for himself and he volunteered the suggestion that he should make discreet enquiries of the Government as to whether they had made any plans. He would be back here early next week and should have definite information on the subject. We are of the opinion, however, also in the case of Belgium, that the stocks could be destroyed at short notice.

With regard to the P.S. of my letter, it is clear that, as far as Holland is concerned, it will not now be necessary to consult the other companies, and whether it will be necessary in the case of Belgium depends on the reply which our representative brings back with him next week.

Yours truly,

(Sgd.) F. GOLBER.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

106

Lieut.-Colonel Jacob.

I enclose copies of reports by Captain
Randy on his visit to Rotterdam and the
Herk of Holland and by Captain Hickling
on his visit to Antwerp.

There are several points in these reports
which will be of interest to Lord Harkness.

T. H. Bunn

Vic. Admiral 28-10-39

6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

127

VICE ADMIRAL BIRNEY'S COMMITTEE.

Report on Visit to Rotterdam and Hook of Holland.

1. Progress of Visit.

October 21st. 0828. Left London by train.
1100. Arrived Brighton.
1130. Arrived Shoreham airport.
1300. Took off in K.L.M. aircraft.
1500. Arrived Amsterdam airport.
Drove to H.B.M. Legation at The Hague.
1630 - 1930. Visited Rotterdam with Naval Attaché (by car).

October 22nd. Visited Amsterdam with Naval Attaché (by train).

October 23rd. A.M. At Rotterdam.
1330 - 1600. On New Waterway in a tug.
1630 - 1900. Returned to The Hague via Hook of Holland (by car).

October 24th. 0800. Left The Hague (by car) for Amsterdam airport.
0900. Took off in K.L.M. aircraft.
1130. Arrived Shoreham airport.
1500. Arrived London (by train).

2. General Impressions on Holland.

During my short visit the main impressions which I formed of the state of affairs in Holland (based entirely on conversations with H.B.M. Minister and the Service Attachée) were as follows:-

- (a) Holland is 100% neutral. Her politicians and hence her senior officers are absolutely determined to have no form of Staff talks with the British, French or Belgians. They avoid answering any questions which might involve them in any way in the war.

(b).....

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

- (b) The Dutch are very keen on making money and their principal idea at present is to continue to do so in spite of the war.

Mobilisation of about 300,000 men is costing them a lot and for this reason alone it is considered essential to take every opportunity to make more money.

- (c) Holland is about 50/50 in its feelings for or against Germany or the Allies. German propaganda is very intense and highly organised by a very large, well trained and expert staff in comparison with which the British staff is minute.

Note: An often recurring form of German propaganda is the warning that the British are about to land on the Dutch coast.

- (d) The general feeling appears to be that the Germans might quite likely attack Belgium through the Limburg appendix but if they did Holland would merely sit back and carry on trading etc. with the remainder of their country and not make war.

- (e) I found it very difficult to form any clear idea as to how prepared Holland is to prevent Germany over-running her country, except as in (d).

There is no doubt that parts have been effectively "watted" (as opposed to "flooded") but I did not see or hear of any organisation for systematic demolition etc.

- (f) I formed a very definite conclusion that it would be quite impracticable and most unwise to attempt to send parties (Naval or Military) to Holland's aid without the previous concurrence of the Dutch Government. H.B.W's Minister was very definite on this point. I personally doubt if they would ever give their permission in time as I feel that

neutrality.....

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Public Record Office

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

The Dutch Naval mine and torpedo station at The Hook is very small and close alongside the L.N.E.R. jetty. Apart from this and the guns there appeared to me to be no objectives of any great value.

I consider that it would be very easy to block the entrance to the new waterway by a specially prepared block ship. Failing this, I was given to understand that the waterways would rapidly silt up if the breakwater on the northern side which has recently been extended was breached. It is this breakwater alone which stops the waterway silting up.

Dredgers did not appear to be used at all in the lower parts of the waterway as the breakwater prevents any silting.

The road from The Hook to Rotterdam runs on the northern side of the waterway at varying distances from it up to 3 miles. The road is in most places very narrow and would presumably be easily blocked, and in any case would be a very slow means of communication if there was much traffic caused by refugees or military movements.

There is no communication by road across the river from north to south until the main bridge at Rotterdam is reached. Little motor transport would appear to be available at The Hook.

I am certain that the only possible way of moving a military party from The Hook to Rotterdam would be by water transport. In the event of the British Naval Attaché informing the Naval Control Staff at Rotterdam that a destroyer was arriving at The Hook I am assured that there would be no difficulty in sending a tug or tugs to meet her. No speed boats of any kind are used at Rotterdam or on the waterway.

As the Naval Control Staff frequently hire tugs for their inspection of merchant ships the sending of tugs to The Hook would not be very unusual.

1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

4. Details of Rotterdam.

I have brought back with me a guide to Rotterdam and the new waterway which gives every conceivable detail of the port and its facilities.

Until one has actually visited the place one has very little idea of its vastness. The berths for sea-going ships amount to over 16 miles, there are 16 floating docks and I personally counted well over 200 oil tanks. In fact the impression I got was that it was bigger than the Port of London. The distance apart of the various possible objectives is so great that I consider it would take a long time to destroy the facilities of the port if this were to include dry docks, cranes, fuelling facilities, iron ore handling plant, etc. If the oil tanks alone were taken as an objective it might be possible to do serious damage in daylight hours of one day.

Shipbuilding.

The following ships have been recently launched and are now completing:

At Wiltons	One 7,000 ton Anglo-Saxon tanker.
At Rotterdam Dry Dock	Two small destroyers launched 10 days ago.
At L. Smit & CO.	One ship of 1,100 tons.

Three Dutch submarines are also being completed in carefully boarded up slipways. It was impossible to form any idea as to when they would be ready for sea.

Shipping.

Up to 2 weeks ago there were about 30 ships laid up in the Waalhaven and also in the German owned Vuloen Haven. There are now only about six laid up. This figure excludes 4 small Germans. The entire ore carrying fleet has recently left and it is believed that part of the ownership of this fleet is German, although all ships are registered under the Dutch Flag.

1

2

3

4

5

6

1

2

3

4

5

6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

The average number of British ships in the port at any moment is 2 to 3 and I estimate the number of neutral ships in the order of 30, some of which are in dry dock.

I was told that Rear Admiral Heeria of the Dutch Navy has recently been appointed Controller of Shipping and I think that through this channel it would be easy to clear the port of shipping. The Naval Control Staff could guarantee to clear the harbour of British shipping in a few hours. They actually carried out this duty just before the war and told me of the splendid way in which the Merchant Captains co-operated with them. They are confident that the harbour could again be cleared of British ships equally quickly, i.e., in about 4 hours.

Oil Fuel Installations.

There appeared to be 4 main installations, 2 of which belong to Shell and 1 to Esso.

There are 4 subsidiary installations which may be partly Asphalt.

The tank storage plan adopted by Shell which is by far the biggest is to put the tanks in pits. Up to 4 tanks are in each pit and the pits are below ground level to a depth of about 6 feet; except where roads run between the tanks the average size of the barrier is 7 feet at the base and about 5 feet at the top. Esso tanks are, however, apparently built on ground level and then a barrier has been built up around the tanks to a height of about 4 feet. It is from this installation that German barges leave almost every night and I saw a large Norwegian tanker at this berth.

The remaining installations are mainly built on ground level with no barriers and the highest numbered tank that I saw was 126. The largest tanks here are built apparently in a manner which is a compromise between the two forementioned systems.

Other.....

A.E.W.
C

M.B.W.
C

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Other similar installations are I think on ground level or have sunk tanks.

In the Shell installation the pumps appeared to be about 8 feet below ground level and as far as could be seen all other pumps were on ground level. It would appear, therefore, that in the majority of cases ample arrangements have been made to catch the oil in the event of the tanks being holed, and it would appear to me that nearly every tank would have to be holed and the contents burnt in order to prevent the oil falling into German hands.

Iron Ore Installation.

These works are the largest in size of any buildings in Rotterdam and I have no idea how a demolition party would start to work to damage any vital part of it.

Barges.

German Rhine barges were very much in evidence and seemed to be doing a very big trade. In addition a large number are laid up in the Waalhaven. I understand that the carrying capacity of the largest barge is somewhere about 4,000 tons.

Trade.

Almost the principal trade at present appears to be the establishment of German coal to Italy. This goes down the Rhine by barge to Rotterdam where it is transferred to sea-going steamers. I enclose a cutting from "The Daily Telegraph" of 24th October on this subject which may be of interest.

5. Conclusions as regards Rotterdam and The Hook.

I presume the Germans might use these places as Naval Bases owing to their geographical positions being slightly nearer England than their own bases. The facilities for ship repair and fuelling and the easiness of dispersing their forces along the various quays in the event of air attacks might be attractive.

M.E.W.

M.E.W.

M.E.W.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE
 CAB 63/129
 Reference:

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

From a commercial point of view in the event of Germany over-running Holland I cannot foresee Rotterdam being much used as a seaport. It is true that the coal trade to Italy might continue and I presume that iron ore might be sent by sea via The Hook from Sweden.

If our problem was merely to prevent the use of the port from seaward I would say without hesitation that the entrance to the new waterway should be blocked by a block ship. Unfortunately this would not prevent the stocks and facilities at Rotterdam being available to Germany by inland waterways in the Rhine barges.

It therefore does appear important to demolish as many of these facilities as possible. To attempt to do this with small military demolition parties appears to me quite impossible.

I am not an expert at demolition, but I feel that a party of, say, 50 with a ton of explosives could make even less impression on Rotterdam than they could on the Port of London.

For this reason I agree with the proposal that military demolition parties should deal with oil stocks only.

In my opinion the only satisfactory way of dealing with objectives other than fuel stocks would be for a man o' war, either Dutch or British, to steam slowly along the waterway and, after due notice, shell barges, floating docks, lock gates, floating cranes, etc. I consider that a vast amount of damage could be done in a very few hours in this way.

I recommend that the breaching of the breakwaters at The Hook, especially the northern ones, should be considered.

6. Other minor points of interest connected with my visit.

(a) The windows of all K.L.M. aircraft have been frosted and the height indicator apparently disconnected. From the time of taking off to the time of landing one has not the slightest idea of one's course or height, nor whether one is over the land or the sea.

(b).....

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

CONFIDENTIAL - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

(b) Several of my fellow passengers were proceeding by air from Shoreham to Copenhagen via Amsterdam.

Note: This confirms the Kalundborg broadcast quoted in Daily Summary of Naval Events No.51.

(c) Passengers travelling in K.L.M. aircraft have to sign statements that they are not actively employed in any military capacity by any of the belligerents and that they have not been ordered to take passage by any civil Government department.

Note: I assumed military was intended to mean the small m. type!

(d) I understand that the registration forms in Dutch hotels are very carefully compiled and checked. It is therefore obvious that serving Naval Officers should on no account attempt to stay in any Dutch hotel.

Note: I stayed at the Legation at The Hague.

(e) I was very much impressed by the efficiency and knowledge of the Naval Control Staff at Rotterdam - (Commander Crocker, Lieut.Commander Holl and another Lieut.Commander). They appeared to have a complete grasp of their work, to have establish most cordial relations with the Merchant Service Masters and Shipping Agents and to have a remarkable insight as to what was going on in the port.

In passing I would mention that their pay is considerably in arrears and that their allowances for living in Holland are obviously completely inadequate at the present rate of exchange. I understand H.B.M. Minister has represented this.

(f) It is very unfortunate that we have not been able to capture any of the German merchant ships which have left Rotterdam for Germany since war was declared. The Naval Control Staff were able to give adequate notice of their departure. Only four small ones now remain.

(g).....

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Copyright - Not to be reproduced photographically without permission

Naval Record Office

(g) A considerable number of Polish trawlers (? 150) with crews are laid up at Ymuiden and possibly at other ports. I understand the French Government offered to take them over but that the crews preferred to remain where they were and be fed free by the Dutch Government. I enclose a cutting from "The Daily Express" of 25th October which may have some bearing on the subject.

ME.W. (h) I was led to believe that a large amount of oil is arriving at Rotterdam and guaranteed by the Dutch Government as being required for consumption in Holland. A large proportion of it leaves daily for Germany by Rhine barges.

(i) I presume that the export of coal from Germany and Poland to Italy via Rotterdam cannot legally be stopped.

(Sgd.) C. MOODY.

Captain, R.N.

October, 1939.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Copyright - Not to be reproduced photographically without permission

A. Extract from "Daily Telegraph", October 24th, 1939.
(Vide paragraph 4).

X X X X X

Paying in Polish Coal.

The "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" says, under the heading "Coal as Money", that in future a large part of German payments abroad will have to be made by coal deliveries.

The newspaper adds that the German production of 188,000,000 tons will be increased by 40,000,000 tons from Polish territory, thus making Germany second only to the United States as coal producer.

X X X X X

B. Extract from "Daily Express", October 25th, 1939.
(Vide paragraph 6(g)).

X X X X X

Five Polish Boats to become British.

Five trawlers which escaped from Poland when war started will soon be British. They have been lying in dock, their crews workless.

A new company has been formed by Mr. Fred Parke, principal of several important fishing companies, to take them over. The crews will be Britons and Poles.

X X X X X

Report of Visit to Brussels and Antwerp by
Captain Harold Hickling, R.N.,
21st to 25th October, 1939.

<u>Contents.</u>	<u>Page.</u>
Object.	1
Procedure.	1
Results.	1
Programma.	2
Political.	2 - 4
Navigational.	5
Water Transport.	5 - 6
Land Transport.	6
Oil Installations.	6 - 7
Docks.	7 - 8
Barges.	8
Tugs, Dredgers, Salvage.	8 - 9

Reference:-
CAB 63/129

ENCLOSURES.

Appendix I. Details of Fuel Storage, Antwerp.

Plans 1, 2, 3. Antwerp Docks.

* Plan 4. Oil Installation - Hoboken.

Plan 5. Oil Installation - Hemixen.

Plan 6. Waterways of Belgium, Holland, etc.

Plan 7. Ternhausen-Ghent Canal.

Plan 8. Road Map Antwerp-Rotterdam.

Plan 9. Road Map Brussels-Ostend.

* Is a personal copy and should be
returned to No.9, Buckingham Gate, S.W.1.

No plan enclosed with this copy

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Object.

1. The object of the visit was to make a reconnaissance of Antwerp and its approaches and by personal contact to obtain first-hand information of the port.

2. Particular attention was paid to the possibility of the Germans making use of Antwerp in the event of their occupying Belgium.

The extent to which the facilities of the port could be denied to the Germans by a destroyer and small Royal Engineer and seaman demolition parties in the space of 12 hours of daylight was also considered.

Procedure.

3. It was decided that I should travel as a private individual and not as a Naval Officer. To this end I was furnished with an ordinary passport as a civilian and also with a courier passport to and from Brussels.

A Foreign Office bag was carried each way.

To avoid registration I stayed with His Excellency the British Ambassador, Sir Robert Clive while in Brussels and with Mr. G.A. Fisher the Consul-General while at Antwerp.

No difficulty with any Belgian officials was encountered - amongst civilians I passed as a "Mister" interested in the port facilities of Antwerp.

Results.

4. The visit was of value and its object achieved; moreover a useful liaison was made with the Naval Control Staff at Antwerp. Certain matters raised by the letter are being dealt with separately.

Programme

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Programme.5. Saturday,
31st October.

121

0900. Left London - arrived Brussels (by air) 1830.
 1600. Interview with Colonel Omlthorpe -
 Passport Control Officer.
 1800. Discussed mission with H.E.
 2200. Interview with Mr. Satons - Commercial
 Counsellor. Stayed at Embassy.

Sunday,
28nd October.

- p.m. Proceeded to Antwerp and put up at the
 residence of Consul-General with whom
 I discussed my visit.

Monday,
23rd October.

- a.m. Visited Antwerp oil wharves installation
 at Hemixen and installations at Hoboken.
 p.m. Tour of Antwerp docks, locks, etc.

Tuesday,
24th October.

- a.m. Visited barge depots and certain quays.
 p.m. Visited Mr. Whipp, Vice-Consul at Ghent.
 Returned to Embassy, Brussels.

Wednesday,
25th October.

1000. Left Brussels - arrived London 1630.

Political Situation.

6. The following is the opinion formed of the
 political situation in Belgium.

Via-a-vis Germany.

7. The chances of Germany violating the neutrality of
 Belgium are assessed as 100 to 1 against. A very different
 situation to that of 1914 now prevails in Belgium.

(a)

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

TELE RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

- (a) Belgium is fully mobilised and has 400,000 men under arms. She is determined to fight to resist invasion.
- (b) The outer lines of defence - the Albert Canal to the northward and the Liege-Namur to the southward - are very strong. There is a second line round Brussels and the Scheldt, and a third based on Bruges-Ghent-Ypres.
- (c) There is no foundation for the opinion (believed to be held in official circles in Great Britain) that the Belgians are not taking adequate steps to hold up a German advance. On the contrary nothing is being left to chance, at any rate on the frontier. All bridges, railway crossings, roads, etc. are mined and can be destroyed at the touch of the key: two arteries have in fact gone up without that touch.
- (d) So confident is the Belgian Government of delaying a German advance on the frontier that no active steps appear to have been taken for demolition far behind the frontier, e.g., the Port of Antwerp. In view of the Belgians' determination to resist the Germans it is thought that they will not hesitate to adopt the "scorched earth" policy should the occasion arise, and they are confident their delaying tactics will give ample time to effect this successfully.

Note: An exception to this is the Brussels tunnel under the Scheldt - the finest piece of civil engineering in Belgium. They are so pleased with this effort that they are unlikely to consent to its being flooded.

- (e) The great weakness is the Belgian air force - fifty aircraft and obsolete at that.

required by Great Britain.

Navigation information.

13. In clear weather the navigation of the Scheldt should present no difficulties to a British warship provided the various aids to navigation are functioning.

In low visibility the services of a pilot are strongly recommended.

If a Scheldt pilot cannot be obtained the Captains of the L.N.E.R. steamers S.S's Bruges - Malines - Antwerp would be competent to carry out this duty. The Captain of the Bruges is the first choice.

Mr. Horace Vine - a one time Eng. Lt. Cdr. now believed to be at Harwich who was until recently berthing officer for tankers at Antwerp - also has considerable local knowledge.

14. The depth of water in the Scheldt is ample at all states of the tide for a destroyer to reach points well above Antwerp. The river is wide enough for her to turn.

There are numerous quays between the Docks and Hoboken - see Plans 1, 2 and 3 - alongside which a destroyer and in most cases a 10,000 ton cruiser could berth. Ships up to 18,000 tons have discharged cargo at Hammen - six miles above Antwerp.

Water Transport (for Troops).

15. As a destroyer can go alongside abreast of and in close proximity to any objectives likely to be earmarked for destruction the transport of personnel and explosives should not arise.

16. Should water transport be required the following is available:-

(1)

- (i) The "Flandria" fleet. Approximately eight ships of the "penny steamer type" - capacity 100-200 men.
- (ii) Two motor cruisers - about 45 ft. long, speed 20 knots.
- (iii) Two "ehrys-craft" - speed boat type - 28 knots.

(ii) and (iii) are at the disposal of Mr. Rex Newman, 85, Quai Jordeens. They are for sale.

Land Transport (for Troops).

17. It is important to bear in mind that in the event of an emergency all motor vehicles and all petrol in Belgium is commandeered by the State - a proportion of this has already been conscripted.

18. About a dozen private cars, the property of the Consul-General, Naval Control Staff, etc., together with petrol and driver are exempt and should be available.

19. It is probable that a few commercial lorries could be obtained at short notice.

In addition Mr. Whipp (Vice-Consul at Ghent) seemed confident that his fleet of lorries consisting of:-

- 9 - 5 ton lorries.
- 3 - 3 ton lorries.
- 1 - 10 ton lorry.
- 1 - 35 seater maharajah-bano.

would not be commandeered in the event of a state of emergency being declared.

Oil Installations.

20. The total oil storage capacity at Antwerp is just under one million tons. The bulk of this is at Habsken (see Plan No. 4) situated about 3 miles up river from Antwerp and is owned by various nationalities.

A second installation, Antwerp Oil Wharves Ltd., a British concern, at Hemixen (70,000 tons) is also on the river front, six miles up river from Antwerp (see Plan No. 5).

A.....

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Note: Tons are metric tons - about 2,000 lbs.
depending on the S.G. of the fuel.

The actual amount in stock varies daily but is approximately one-third of the total capacity. The stocks held in Antwerp on 14th October 1959 were as follows:-

Benzine	-	98,094	tons.
Kerosine	-	9,400	"
Gas oil	-	45,000	"
Fuel oil	-	26,000	"
Marine diesel	-	20,000	"
Lubricating oil	-	38,000	"
Crude oil	-	31,000	"

261,494

22. By law all fuel tanks must be inside bunds and caucera sufficient to take a quarter of the capacity of the tanks.

The majority of these saucers have a rain water drain (controlled), which would allow oil to be run off into the river if desired.

25. As light and heavy oil tanks are mixed up indiscriminately there should be little difficulty of setting fire to any installation.

24. All installations have wharves alongside which ships up to 18,000 tons can berth.

Docks.

25. The lay-out of the Decks is shown in Plans 1, 2 and 3.

26. The destruction of the lock gates (some of them double) at the four entrances to the Scheldt should present

Reference:-										
	CAB 63/129									
	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
	1	2	3	4	5	6				
							1			
							1	2		
	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									

no difficulties.

The entrances are:-

- (1) Kruisschane Sluis.
- (2) Ruyere Sluis.
- (3) Kattendock Sluis.
- (4) Bonaparte Sluis.

27. Reed bridges of the cantilever type span the above lock entrances and could be made an added obstruction. At various points inside the docks entrances to locks, basins and dry docks could be similarly blocked.

Barges.

28. There are over 8,000 barges registered in Belgium varying from the small 100/150 ton horse and woman drawn wooden barge to the 1,000/1,500 ton self-propelled barges (speed 8 knots) used for international traffic.

29. At any one time there are 1,000/1,200 barges in Antwerp.

30. The Inland and River water routes of Belgium - the Rhine etc., are shown in Plane No. 6 and 7.

31. The barges are run by families who live on board always.

32. Large quantities of cement are available should it be decided to carry out blocking operations with barges.

Tugs, Dredgers, Salvage Plants.

33. Tugs.

There are 40 City Dock tugs and 58 River tugs. The latter are stationed at Antwerp, Ternanssen (Dutch - at the entrance to the Ghent Canal), Flushing and Zeebrugge. They vary from 1,200 to 200 horse power and are fitted with wireless.

34.

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

128

84. Dredgers.

There are six bucket dredgers owned by the Société Générale de Dragage and are to be found in Antwerp Roads, Antwerp Docks and in the Albert Canal.

85. Salvage Plants.

Extensive salvage plants are available in Antwerp belonging to the Union de Remdquage et de Sauvetage,

15. Quai Jordaens.

Note: This firm has placed salvage tugs etc. fully equipped at Ostend waiting for eventualities.

skipping

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

APPENDIX I

INSTALLATION STORAGE OF PETROLEUM IMPORTERS IN BELGIUM.

Capacities in M3.

All at Hoboken except / at Hamixen and n in the Docks.

Companies.	Benzine.	Kerosene.	Black Oils.	White Spirit.	Crude Oil.	Lub.Oil.	Turpen-tine.	Creosote.	Unclasse-ified.	Total.
S.A. Alliance (B.P.)	18,800	5,760	15,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	57,560
American Greenock Company, Antwerp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	12,184	-	12,184
American Petroleum Company, Antwerp.	27,341	9,953	51,096	1,105	15,840	-	-	-	-	85,254
Antwerp Oil Wharves, Hamixen.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	70,800	70,800
Atlantic Oil Storage Company, Antwerp.	14,328	-	-	-	-	6,934	-	-	-	21,262
Bedford Petroleum Company, Antwerp.	-	-	-	-	-	15,539	-	-	-	15,539
Belgian Cracking Co., Langenbrugghe nr. Ghent.	1,640	1,325	-	-	6,000	-	-	-	-	10,965
Belgian Gulf Oil Company, Antwerp.	15,192	-	17,019	-	-	58,980	-	-	-	69,171
(Belgian Shell Company.	20,755	-	17,850	-	-	-	-	-	-	38,585
(Belgian Shell Refinery, Ghent.	11,989	-	11,321	-	11,619	4,720	-	-	-	39,549
(Belgian Shell Company, Bruges.	1,059	-	7,550	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,609
Belgo-Petroleum, Ghent-Turduak.	2,400	5,200	-	-	17,800	-	-	-	-	25,200
France-Belge, S.A., Antwerp (on behalf of Purflin).	5,785	-	-	-	22,745	-	-	-	-	28,530
Begrudin (Huiles, Esences & Graines Minérales), Antwerp.	7,661	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,661
Levita, Antwerp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	828	-	-	828
Miesse, Vilvoorde nr. Brussels.	7,250	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,250
Raffinerie & Distillerie Anversoise (Radlan) Antwerp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Soc. Belge de Pétroles, Antwerp.	9,580	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	106,000	106,000
Redevante, Antwerp.	-	950	9,870	-	20,810	-	-	-	-	41,210
Purflin, S.A. Etvelde nr. Ghent.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	151,250	151,250
Sinclair Petroleum Co., nr. Ghent/Doornsele-Begatelle.	24,780	2,500	10,000	-	-	10,400	-	-	-	47,680
Soc. de Créosote, Antwerp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16,455	-	16,455
Soc. d'Entrepôts, Antwerp (A.P.C.)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,500	-	-	1,500
Tankage & Transport (Davidis Group) Antwerp.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	46,201	46,201
Trading Depot S.A. Antwerp.	750	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	750
Texas Oil Company.	28,070	5,355	-	-	-	17,809	-	-	-	49,232
S.A. Orlan, Antwerp.	5,670	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,670
Transport & Trading Co. (Coal Trading Association) Antwerp.	-	-	7,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	7,000
TOTAL.....	178,030	25,180	111,706	1,105	94,614	92,582	2,528	29,639	556,251	925,735

130

SECRET.

(C 17596/G.)

With Mr. Strang's
compliments.

Foreign Office, S.W.1.
3rd November, 1939.

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						CAB 63/129					
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

reference

COPY.

(910/11/39)

SECRET.

131
British Legation,

The Hague,

29th October, 1939.

Dear Alec,

Your letter of October 12th.

At lunch to-day Holman had an opportunity of meeting Hirschfeld, Director General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, and took the occasion to raise the question of the Dutch Gold reserve in the course of his conversation. Hirschfeld told him that, although it might have been kept secret from the Bank of England, it was a fact that two thirds of the Dutch Gold reserve was at present in the United States of America and South Africa, most of it being in the former. Holman tried to draw him on the question of the security of the remainder in Holland in the event of German aggression, citing German action in Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc. Mr. Hirschfeld appeared to think that the German Government would not pay particular attention to Dutch gold. The question of bearer securities was not mentioned.

It is possible that the hint conveyed to Hirschfeld, who is an intelligent man, may not have fallen on completely stony ground.

Yours ever,

(SD) NEVILLE BLAND.

The Honourable

Sir Alexander Cadogan, G.C.M.G., C.B.,
FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

132

SECRET.

(C 17597/G)

With Mr. Streng's
compliments.

Foreign Office,
3rd November, 1939.

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						CAB 63/129					
Reference:-											
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

gue Reference

COPY.

SECRET.

British Legation, 132

The Hague.

29th October, 1939.

Dear Aloo,

As Snouck (your opposite number here), my brother-in-law and I were sitting over our second glass of port last night, and the conversation was becoming free and unrestrained, I got an opportunity to ask S. what he thought he was going to do with all their oil at Rotterdam when the Germans came in: surely they wouldn't let them have it, would they? He said they'd just set a match to it. I said surely it would take rather more than that? He said "Oh no, it's quite easy to destroy it, and anyhow I don't think there's much there".

Actually I am advised that experts consider that, if the stuff were fired on a rising tide, the whole of Rotterdam would be burnt!

In haste to catch the bag.

Yours ever,

(SD) NEVILLE BLAND.

1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					

134

Dear Morton,

One of the results of the meeting we held on Monday, 9th October, to consider the measures to be taken in Holland and Belgium in the event of an invasion by Germany was the despatch to Holland by the Admiralty of a Naval Captain, who travelled as a courier and stayed at the British Legation, with instructions to examine on the spot the tasks that would fall to him in the event of the emergency postulated.

I have just read his report on a visit to Amsterdam, the Hook and Rotterdam. Though mainly objective and technical in character, it contains a certain amount of information which may be useful to you in connection with economic warfare and especially the prevention of oil from reaching Germany. I enclose the relevant extracts, which relate entirely to the port of Rotterdam.

Yours sincerely,

Major D.J.F. Morton, C.M.G., M.C.,
Ministry of Economic Warfare.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

1	2	3	4	5	6
1 2 3 4 5 6					

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

135

MOST SECRET.

30th October, 1939.

My dear Foley,

One of the results of our meeting at Richmond Terrace on the 9th October to consider the measures to be taken in Holland and Belgium in the event of an invasion by Germany was the despatch by the Admiralty of a Naval Captain, who travelled as a courier and stayed at the British Embassy, Brussels, and the Consulate-General, Antwerp, with instructions to examine on the spot the tasks that would fall to him in the event of the emergency postulated.

I have just read his report. Though mainly objective in character, it contains a few extracts which might be useful to you in connection with this subject.

I enclose the relevant extracts.

Sir Julian Foley, C.B.,
Ministry of Shipping.

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

MOST SECRET.

136
30th October, 1939.

Dear Nicholl,

I have read the report on the visit of certain Naval Officers to Rotterdam, the Hook of Holland and Antwerp, and have forwarded extracts from the report to Major Morton of the Ministry of Economic Warfare and to Sir Julian Foley of the Ministry of Shipping.

I enclose copies of the letters to Morton and Foley forwarding the extracts from the report.

I have also sent copies to Lord Chatfield and to Admiral Sinclair.

Perhaps you would show this letter and enclosures to Colonel Jacob, who is interested from the point of view of Belgium and Holland.

Captain A.D. Nicholl, R.N.,
Offices of the War Cabinet.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Extract from report by Gerald G. Nease, R.N.,
on a visit to Rotterdam and the Hook of Holland,
October 21st to 24th, 1939.

137

Oil Fuel Installations.

There appeared to be 4 main installations, 2 of which belong to Shell and 1 to Esso.

... ..

Esso tanks are, however, apparently built on ground level and then a barrier has been built up around the tanks to a height of about 4 feet. It is from this installation that German barges leave almost every night and I saw a large Norwegian tanker at this berth.

... ..

Iron Ore Installation.

These works are the largest in size of any buildings in Rotterdam and I have no idea how a demolition party would start to work to damage any vital part of it.

Barges.

German Rhine barges were very much in evidence and seemed to be doing a very big trade. In addition a large number are laid up in the Waalhaven. I understand that the carrying capacity of the largest barge is somewhere about 4,000 tons.

Trade.

Almost the principal trade at present appears to be the establishment of German coal to Italy. This goes down the Rhine by barge to Rotterdam where it is transferred to sea-going steamers. I enclose a cutting from "The Daily Telegraph" of 24th October on this subject which may be of interest.

... ..

I was led to believe that a large amount of oil is arriving at Rotterdam and guaranteed by the Dutch Government as being required for consumption in Holland. A large proportion of it leaves daily for Germany by Rhine barges.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Extract from "Daily Telegraph", October 24th, 1939.

x

x

x

Paying in Polish Coal.

The "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung" says, under the heading "Coal as Money", that in future a large part of German payments abroad will have to be made by coal deliveries.

The newspaper adds that the German production of 186,000,000 tons will be increased by 40,000,000 tons from Polish territory, thus making Germany second only to the United States as coal producer.

x

x

x

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Extract from report by Captain Harold Hickling,
on a visit to Antwerp,
October 21st to 25th, 1919.

12. Indications of pre-British sympathy are not lacking. I was informed by the Consul-General that -

- (i) Companies who supplied barges for the Allies in the last war have volunteered their services in this war.
- (ii) The "Flandria Steamship Company" is ready to place their fleet of ferry type ships at our disposal and also to collect and re-condition a number of small craft dispersed in 1919-20 should such be required by Great Britain.

Navigational information.

13. In clear weather the navigation of the Scheldt should present no difficulties to a British warship provided the various aids to navigation are functioning.

In low visibility the services of a pilot are strongly recommended.

If a Scheldt pilot cannot be obtained the Captains of the L.N.E.R. steamers G.S.'s Bruges - Malines - Antwerp would be competent to carry out this duty. The Captain of the Bruges is the first choice.

Mr. Horace Vine - a one time Eng.Lt.Cdr. now believed to be at Harwich who was until recently berthing officer for tankers at Antwerp - also has considerable local knowledge.

... ..

Barges.

28. There are over 8,000 barges registered in Belgium varying from the small 100/150 ton horse and woman drawn wooden barge to the 1,000/1,500 ton self-propelled barges (Speed 6 knots) used for international traffic.

29. At any one time there are 1,000/1,200 barges in Antwerp.

30. The Inland and River water routes of Belgium - the Rhine, etc., are shown in Plans Nos. 6 and 7.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

1

2

3

4

5

6

1

2

31. The barges are run by families who live on board always.

32. Large quantities of cement are available should it be decided to carry out blocking operations with barges.

Tugs, Dredgers, Salvage Plants.

33. Tugs.

There are 40 City Dock tugs and 36 River tugs. The latter are stationed at Antwerp, Ternanzen (Dutch - at the entrance to the Ghent Canal), Flushing and Zeebrugge. They vary from 1,200 to 200 horse power and are fitted with wireless.

34. Dredgers.

There are six bucket dredgers owned by the Société Générale de Dragage and are to be found in Antwerp Roads, Antwerp Docks and in the Albert Canal.

35. Salvage Plants.

Extensive salvage plants are available in Antwerp belonging to the Union de Remdquage et de Sauvetage, 15, Quai Jordsons.

Note: This firm has placed salvage tugs, etc., fully equipped at Ostend waiting for eventualities.

Reference:-		CAB 63/129	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

Captain Nicholl *W.H. 21 x 39.*
To note and return.

Hankey
21. x. 39
D/066(a)

MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC WARFARE,
Houghton Street,
Aldwych, W.C. 2.

141

MOST SECRET.

31st October, 1939.

Dear Lord Hankey

Thank you very much for your Most Secret letter of the 30th October with extracts from the report to the Admiralty of a certain naval captain.

I am perhaps most interested in his statement regarding the alleged passage to Germany of large quantities of oil from Holland. It is extraordinarily hard to get proof of this, but so widespread and circumstantial are the many reports and rumours that I do not feel we ought to regard them all as moonshine. The opposite view to mine is held, however, in many quarters.

Yours sincerely,

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,
Treasury Chambers,
S.W. 1.

D. Morrison

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-
gue Reference

SECRET

142
1st November, 1939.

With Mr. Strang's compliments.

And Hankin

624

*fr
2/n*

Colonel E.I.C. Jacob.

143

1st November, 1939.

SECRET

With reference to my letter C 16287/G of October 12th and subsequent correspondence about the measures which have been under consideration to meet the eventuality of a German invasion of Belgium, I enclose a summary of the action to be taken if and when the invasion occurs.

2. You will see from page 1 of the summary that what is required of you is

(a) to impress on the Belgian Government the importance of preventing assets of military or economic value from falling into the hands of the enemy;

(b) to ask the Belgian Government whether the co-operation of the British forces in this work would be welcome and, if so, to inform them of the plans which have been made and are ready to be implemented;

(c)...

The Right Honourable
Sir R.H. Clive, G.C.M.G.,
Sir N. Bland, K.C.V.O., C.M.G.,

Reference:-	CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
20	10	5	2	1
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8

144

(e) in the event of a favourable answer to the above question, to make, with the help of the Service Attachés, all the necessary arrangements to secure the safe arrival of the British forces and their reception by the Belgian authorities;

(d) to report immediately to the Foreign Office whether the Belgian Government are willing to accept our co-operation.

3. The Secretary of State wishes you to regard the present letter and its enclosure as your instructions to act accordingly in the event of an invasion of Belgium by Germany.

(Sd) A. CADOGAN

Belgium - Holland file

145

-SECRET-

Reference No. 14/31/116.

2nd November, 1939.

Dear Lord Hankey

...

I enclose a copy of a letter from the British Military Attaché in Brussels, which is very interesting.

Unless our Attaché is unduly optimistic, there is a fair prospect that the Belgians, if attacked, will do everything needful, both inland and at the ports. No doubt our co-operation will be of great value, but we may have to walk warily when the time comes to propose it. I do not think any change in our plans is indicated.

Yours sincerely

Bischoff

The Rt. Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

146

1st November, 1939.

Lieut.-Colonel E.I.C.Jacob, R.E.,
Cabinet Offices,
Richmond Terrace,
S.W.1.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

C O P Y.

SECRET.

British Embassy,
Brussels.

147

28th October, 1939.

Dear Brigadier,

A good opportunity presented itself yesterday to have Commandant Goor to dinner, as the Naval Attaché was staying with me.

During the evening, Commandant Goor disclosed to me that all preparations had been made for dealing with the shipping at Antwerp, that is, as regards Belgian ships. He said that their arrangements included the getting away to safety of all Belgian shipping, and arrangements for blocking the channel of the SCHELDT at short notice.

He also said that full preparations had been made for increasing the traffic at the other Belgian ports, such as Zeebrugge and Ostend, if Antwerp ceased to function owing to enemy action.

As regards the barges on the canal, he said that this was a matter for the General Staff, that they had obviously done something about it, but that it was not his sphere of action. He said he would try and find out and let me know in due course.

I think we need have no worries about the Belgian preparations, which are probably very complete, though they cannot tell us what they are for the usual neutrality reasons.

I hope it is not our intention to block Zeebrugge and Ostend immediately the Belgians become involved, as Commandant Goor told me that he also had complete arrangements prepared for this eventuality.

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

147^A

I doubt if I shall get anything out of the General Staff at all, and it may interest you to know that my French colleague has been given a broad hint not to visit the General Staff for the present. He probably overdid his visits, in fact, I am sure he did, and this is the result. Colonel Laurent is now offended, and says he will not go near them again.

I am not in the same position as he is, as I saw the danger of these frequent visits, and shall continue to tread carefully when in the neighbourhood of Avenue de Cortenberg. I may thus succeed in avoiding a similar hint being given to me.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) F.A.A. BLAKE.

Brigadier W.E. van Cutsem, O.B.E., M.C.,
D.D.M.I., The War Office.

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

SECRET.

148

2nd November, 1939.

My dear Jacob,

Many thanks for your letter (14/31/116) of the 2nd November, enclosing a copy of a letter from the British Military Attaché in Brussels.

I agree that this interesting letter does not change our plans, though possibly it might deserve a reference either in our next revision or in my next report to the Cabinet, which need not be for some time.

By the way, are the Foreign Office going to send to the Ambassador at Brussels and to the Minister at The Hague our paper setting forth their respective responsibilities?

Yours sincerely,

Lt.-Col. E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
Offices of the War Cabinet.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10

-COPY-

MINISTRY OF SHIPPING.

SECRET.

3rd November, 1939.

Ref. No. 14/31/116.

149

Dear Colonel Jacob,

With reference to your letter of the 17th October I have already sent you a copy of a note on the subject of Belgian barges, to which at the present moment there is nothing to add.

With reference to my letter of the 10th October Sir Andrew Agnew has now seen his informant in such matters, from whom he gathered that the Dutch do not think that the eventuality considered is likely to occur. If it does occur they will fight and they have made preparations for the destruction in 12 hours of the oil stores at the ports. The tankers will be got away; if this is not possible the idea is to destroy them too.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) J. FOLEY.

Lieut.-Col. E.J.C. Jacob.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

150

9th November, 1939.

~~SECRET~~

Dear Lord Hankey.

...

In Jacob's absence I am sending you a copy of a letter received from the Foreign Office from H.M. Ambassador in Brussels to Sir Alexander Cadogan, about the action to be taken in the event of a German invasion of Belgium. It is, of course, possible that you may have received a copy direct from the Foreign Office.

I have sent copies also to the three Service Departments. Will you please let me know if there is anything you want me to do before Jacob returns tomorrow.

W. Churchill
L. C. H. H.

The Right Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Copy.

British Embassy,
Brussels.

SECRET.

2nd November, 1939.

Dear Cadogan,

- I have given careful thought to the various questions raised in your Secret letter C 16287/G of October 12th on the general subject of the action to be taken, in the event of Belgium being invaded, with a view to obtaining for ourselves, or denying to the enemy, military and economic assets in this country.
2. It is, as you say, axiomatic that in the event of any German attack on Belgium, the latter would resist to the utmost of her ability and at once call upon us to implement our guarantee. The King, no less than the Government, is however determined not to take any steps in advance of invasion which might be held in any way to compromise Belgium's neutrality in the eyes of Germany. And just as the Government have refused to embark on any kind of Staff contacts so would they, I feel sure, decline to concert with us in advance in regard to the questions raised in your letter. Whilst, however, that is the attitude of the Government, it is possible that a good deal can be done by means of cautious approach through private individuals, bankers, industrialists and officials whose sentiments are so pro-Ally as to make them willing to consider the problems in question and to do their best to further any suggestions we may put to them regardless of the official view.
3. In the above connexion you will have seen from my secret telegram to you of October 17th that the very important questions of the gold reserve and of negotiable securities have already engaged the attention of the Governors of the National Bank and the Société Générale. I shall of course take every opportunity that presents itself in conversations with bankers to emphasise the necessity of precautionary measures being taken in regard to negotiable securities.
4. From the enclosure in this letter, recording a conversation

The Honourable
Sir Alexander Cadogan, G.C.M.G., C.B.

which/

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

which the Naval Attaché had with Commandant Goor of the Marine Administration, you will see that the Belgians are fully alive to the necessity of preparing plans, which they appear indeed to have done already, for denying to the enemy the use of the principal ports and that measures are in hand for the destruction of fuel and other stores at Antwerp. As Captain Schofield very truly observes, the Belgians believe that given adequate support by the Allies, they would be able to hold up a German advance for some considerable time during which opportunity would be provided for putting into effect measures that have already been planned.

Colonel Blake, though he has for obvious reasons not been able to discuss these matters with the General Staff, is of the opinion that the military authorities are quite aware of the necessity of preventing valuable stocks of material falling into the hands of the enemy and he considers it improbable that they have overlooked any of the important steps which would require to be taken in the event of a successful invasion by Germany.

5. As regards the air, the same difficulty arises for the Air Attaché as in the case of the Military Attaché; he clearly cannot make a frontal attack on the Air Staff. On the other hand he has already by various methods been able to ascertain that the Air Staff have made preparations to provide the Allied forces on the outbreak of war with all details of their requirements and plans, together with aerial photographs of proposed strategic targets. The Air Attaché is further satisfied that plans have already been considered, if not finally decided upon for the destruction of air material and aerodromes. The question of the evacuation of civil aircraft and personnel, as well as that of military aircraft will of course be taken up so soon as necessary after the outbreak of war.

6. As regards the removal or destruction of particular machine tools it would be preferable that our approach should be made as suggested in paragraph 21 of your letter to the Belgian industrial interests./

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

interests. The same remark applies to the removal of stocks of metals. You will have seen however from the Ministry of Economic Warfare despatch No.12 of the 19th October, that the only metals, the removal of which appears now to be under consideration are cobalt and uranium. The stock of nickel is already reduced to a minimum, whilst I understand that it is intended to maintain stocks of copper at approximately their present level, i.e. 30-40,000 tons. If further pressure is to be brought to bear with a view to the removal of metals, the total stocks of which, according to the Governor of the Société Générale, were reported in my despatch E.W. 185 of the 17th October, I suggest that it might be done unofficially possibly by Lord Stonehaven, who is a director of the Union Minière and thus in contact with the principal Belgian metal interests.

7. If and when a suitable occasion offers the Military Attaché proposes to call again on General van Overstraeten, the principal Aide-de-Camp of the King and one of the most important military influences in the country. If he finds the atmosphere favourable, but not otherwise, he will broach such questions as have not already been adequately covered by the steps already taken. But in view of the position the General holds and of his attitude of rigid neutrality, it will be clearly necessary to proceed with caution.

8. Meanwhile I think we can assume that the Belgians will not be caught napping, the warning they have had of impending danger having given them ample time to make their plans.

(Sgd.) R.H. CLIVE.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Copy

MOST SECRET

REFERENCE SHEET

From.. The Naval Attaché, Brussels and
The Hague.

To.. Director of Naval
Intelligence.

Date.. 29th October 1939.

No.. 0070/39

Subject

Belgian plans in the event of invasion.

With reference to your Reference Sheet No. 15, dated 13th October 1939 and the Memorandum on Dutch and Belgian Resources enclosed therewith, the following information with regard to plans prepared by the Belgian authorities in the event of a successful invasion of Belgium by Germany, was obtained from Commandant Goor Conseiller Maritime to the Belgian Government during the course of conversation after a dinner given by the Military Attaché at his flat at Brussels on Friday 27th October 1939.

2. Antwerp. Plans are in existence for the speedy evacuation of all shipping in the port, which will be routed to French or British ports, with the exception of a certain number of ships which will be retained for sinking in the channel in the approaches to the port. Stocks of fuel and other stores will be destroyed and plans for doing so are in hand.

3. Orient, Grugge, Zeebrugge, and Ostend. Lock gates in the entrances to the canals will be destroyed. Ships and barges will be sunk in suitable positions in the harbour.

4. No indication whatever was given to Commandant Goor that any plans to assist with the destruction of material etc. had been prepared, but the impression gained was that the whole matter had been carefully considered by the Belgian authorities, the only exception being the removal of the canal barges, which Commandant Goor made a note of and said that he would talk to the Ministry of Inland Waterways about. It is desired to point out,

however/

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
Reference:-	

however, that it is the firm belief of the Belgian authorities that their army will be able to hold up a German advance for some considerable time especially if they received a measure of support from allied troops, the situation being in no way comparable to that which existed in 1914. It is not the intention, therefore, of the Belgian authorities to commence the destruction of their property until such time as it is clearly evident that the country or a portion of it, is likely to fall into the hands of the enemy and it is considered that any efforts on our part to do so prematurely would meet with considerable opposition. On the Naval side I am confident that we can rely on the whole-hearted support of Commandant Goor, when the time comes to take him into our confidence. His sympathies are entirely pro-British and in addition I have formed the opinion that he is a most capable administrator.

CAPTAIN R.N.

Reference:-	
CAB 63/129	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10
11	12
13	14
15	16
17	18
19	20
21	22
23	24
25	26
27	28
29	30
31	32
33	34
35	36
37	38
39	40
41	42
43	44
45	46
47	48
49	50
51	52
53	54
55	56
57	58
59	60
61	62
63	64
65	66
67	68
69	70
71	72
73	74
75	76
77	78
79	80
81	82
83	84
85	86
87	88
89	90
91	92
93	94
95	96
97	98
99	100

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

SECRET.

136

9th November, 1939.

Lieut.Col. Jacob.

I enclose a copy of Captain Aylmer's report on his visit to Flushing and The Hague. There is little new in it to bring to the attention of Lord Hankey.

With reference to his last paragraph under the heading of Ymuiden, this opinion coincides with that of H.M. Minister at The Hague and I do not propose to send an officer to Ymuiden for the present. Ymuiden was the least important of the four reconnaissances to be carried out and we are fortunate to have done the other three.

T. H. B. [Signature]

Vice Admiral.

5	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

Reference:-

SECRET.

VICE ADMIRAL BINNEY'S COMMITTEE.

Report on Visit of Captain E.A. Aymer, D.S.C., R.N.,
to Flushing and The Hague.

(1) Programme of Visit.

November 1st.
(Wednesday)

- 0928 Left Victoria by train.
- 1100 Arrived Brighton.
- 1130 Shoreham airport.
- 1300 Took off in K.L.M. aircraft.
- 1500 Arrived Amsterdam airport.
Drove by K.L.M. car to their office
at The Hague.
- 1600 Met by car and driven to H.B.M. Legation
at The Hague.
- 1630 Received by Sir N. Bland, K.C.V.O., C.M.G.,
H.B.M. Minister at The Hague.
- 1700 Proceeded to Chancery and discussed
future programme with Naval Attaché
(Captain Schofield).
- 1945 Attended a dinner party at the British
Legation.

November 2nd.
(Thursday)

S.M. Naval Attaché arranged to call on the
British Vice Consul, de Bruyne (a Dutchman), at
Flushing on Friday November 3rd. I was invited to
accompany him and both of us to lunch at the Vice
Consul's house and be motored round the district of
Vlissingen (Flushing) - Walcheren Island.

This forenoon a state of siege was
proclaimed by the Dutch Government in frontier
municipalities and at other points of importance in
the defence scheme. This included Flushing and in
fact the whole island of Walcheren.

Special....

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Special Passee to visit Flushing were obtained by the Naval Attaché signed by General van Oorschot, head of the M.I. at The Hague, without which we should have been unable to carry out our projected visit.

November 3rd.
(Friday)

0915 Left The Hague with Naval Attaché by train.
1230 Arrived at Flushing (via Rotterdam and Dordrecht - two changes).

Met on arrival by M. de Bruyne the Vice Consul, who is in business at Middelburg. We first drove in an open car to the Vice Consul's office on the front, which has a Lloyd's signal station on the roof and an office for the Port Pilots next door. (This office is in a very convenient position for watching the movements of ships entering and leaving the Schelde).

In order to avoid any interference de Bruyne had previously informed the Colonel Commanding the district, a friend of his, he would be driving round the Island with two friends. This had the desired effect and actually our passes were never asked for throughout the day.

(2) Visit to Vlissingen (Flushing).

(a) My first impression of the place was that it covered a considerably larger area than the charts and maps of the place would lead one to suppose. As the whole Island was under martial law we had to go somewhat circumspectly about our tours. M. de Bruyne was most obliging and drove us round slowly in an open car. I noticed he shut the hood up occasionally, presumably when about to pass a sentry, but not when there....

Reference: -

CAB 63/129

COPIRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

RECORD OFFICE

there was anything important to see. The station was guarded with Naval and Military sentries and indeed armed guards were met with intermittently all over the island.

(b) Oil fuel tanks. Plan No.42 O.B.1819, shows the position of the main oil tanks. I counted some thirty tanks varying in size: I was told that most of them contained Crude oil and were not government owned but run by a commercial firm.

There were four other large oil tanks in a position a little north of the railway station apparently in the Naval zone. Some of the oil tanks were in pits similar to those at Rotterdam and others built on the ground level with a low barrier built around them. The whole were contained in an area which was bounded by an iron and barbed wire fence and it was not possible to get a close-up view.

There was a tall chimney and power station adjacent to the commercial oil tank depot.

(c) Docks. A new large dry dock has now been completed, the dimensions of this dock were given to the Naval Attaché.

I noticed a cruiser building on the stocks and a new submarine afloat in the basin. The old training ship NOORD-BRABANT is permanently moored alongside the Naval base in the inner Haven, and is used as a barracks in addition to the huts.

A sloop was docking in a small dry dock, reputed to have been opened in the reign of King William and Queen Mary.

The Naval base covers an extensive area which includes huts and a mine depot. I noticed two small warships.....

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE
 CAB 63/129
 COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITH OUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

1 2 3 4 5 6
 1 2 3 4 5 6

warships moored up alongside, these may have been minelayers. I was told a large number of mines were kept here and that this was the main mining depot. The whole naval enclosure was bounded by a high iron and barbed wire fence.

(d) Minelfields. The Dourloo Channel has been mined by the Dutch and mines are constantly breaking adrift. The mines are said to be Vickers make and the mooring rotten! The pilots see many of these mines floating about.

(e) The Walcheren Canal runs straight to Middleburg and on to Verre, the same width and depth throughout its length. Reported to be 8 metres deep. The easiest berth to take up in the harbour is adjoining the Railway jetty which is the jetty passenger steamers use at the present time.

(f) There is little trade and the passenger traffic is very quiet since war began. Steamers which used to ply between Flushing and Harwich twice daily now run three trips a fortnight.

(g) I gained the impression that the garrison of the Island of Walcheren holds a large number of Military and Naval personnel. I was told that any house found empty was immediately commandeered by the Military.

M. de Bruyne's house nearly suffered that fate, whilst the house was undergoing repairs and he had to return with his family and camp in a roofless house to avoid forfeiture to the Military. His farm buildings and stables, which he sold off separately to the house, have the Military already installed.

(h)

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

(h) Middleburg. In the afternoon we continued our tour of Weloheren and visited first Middleburg and then Verre. In the former town we went to the Town Hall, Guildhall, Cathedral and the East Indie Doeks old building. Many of the townsfolk were wearing the national dress and clogs.

There was a barracks in the town and a number of soldiery about.

The Canal runs straight through the town and on to Verre.

(1) Verre. Contains a seaplane base. I was told the seaplanes are either pulled up on the beach or moored at buoys in the inner harbour. It is a small base which we were not able to see in detail. The approaches to Verre lead along Napoleon's road and the fortifications and moats he had constructed are still there.

In various parts of the Island I was informed that A/A defences are in place. I was not able to verify this though I saw a detachment of A/A soldiers.

We concluded our tour before dusk. I was impressed with the Naval and Military activity on the Island which appears to have a strong defence and came to the conclusion that to attempt a landing and any form of demolition of Military objectives without the co-operation and permission of the Netherlands would be suicidal and impracticable.

(3) November 4th.
(Saturday)

0630 Sailed from Flushing for Tilbury after sleeping the night on board.

1600 Arrived Tilbury.

Was informed by the Captain that he had passed several floating mines off Flushing on the trip before, for that reason they do not now sail until daylight.

1730 Arrived London by train.

(4)

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

(4) General Impressions.

During this short visit the main opinion I formed was the strong endeavour of Holland to remain neutral.

Officers of Dutch armed force have been ordered to hold no conversations with our Naval, Military or Air Force Attachés.

Talking with the Netherlands one feels that though outwardly they are 100% neutral, in their heart of hearts they are 100% (or nearly) pro-Allies, though they dare not show this openly.

(a) The towns and even villages have their "dug-out" shelters. "Dug-out" is perhaps the wrong term as if you dig three feet down anywhere in the country you come to water, these therefore take the form of areations cobbled and grassed over.

(b) British newspapers arrive regularly - usually one day late, though some papers do arrive by air mail on the day of issue.

German newspapers and periodicals flood the news agencies and bookstalls and I was able to get a number of these and bring them back with me.

The German illustrated papers such as the "Kölnische Illustrierte Zeitung", "Die Wehrmacht" and the "Müncher Illustrierte Presse", to mention only three of the many, are excellent propaganda, as they are well prepared with good photographs and above all cheap to buy. Whereas corresponding British papers such as the "Illustrated London News", "Sphere", etc., though popular are too expensive to buy in comparison with their German contemporaries.

I brought back a number of these newspapers and periodicals.....

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference -

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

periodicals and had no difficulty in purchasing them at any bookstall in Holland on the date of issue.

The Naval Attaché told me that he would be able to send these regularly by Foreign Office bag, to this country if desired, so getting up-to-date press information. I suggest they would be well worth obtaining, the illustrated papers in particular give much more information, particularly photographically, than was the case in the last war.

The German papers are at present enhancing the 'U' boat campaign by making public heroes of its personnel. Army and Air Force matter is relegated to a minor setting in all these papers.

(c) Press. British propaganda at The Hague suffers from working with a minute staff when compared with the large and efficient staff provided at the German Legation - I was told this latter numbers over 40, many of whom are professional pressmen.

I was told that the reason given for proclaiming a state of siege was due to the public and press clamouring for news on the subject of the country's defence scheme. There has been a good deal of individual spying going on and the Army has now lost patience and taken this action to stop further trouble.

(d) Wishful thinking. There appears to be a strong body of opinion in the country that if Holland were invaded Britain would come to their help. On someone suggesting unkindly that it might take the same form as help given to Poland they had no ready answer, but there is no doubt they have great faith in England.

(5) Other Minor Points of Interest Connected with my Visit.

(a) Shops at The Hague. All the shop keepers I spoke.....

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

spoke to talked good English and seemed pleased to do so, a large percentage of goods in these shops were English.

The stationers shops in particular had all the latest English books and magazines. German newspapers and books were much in evidence too.

The cost of living generally, at The Hague, appeared to be high in comparison to England.

(b) The Military. Large numbers of the Netherlands Army were seen throughout the country. A large percentage mounted on bicycles. I was given to understand there is nothing the soldiers cannot do on bicycles.

(c) Trade. The Dutch Government will apparently not sign any trade agreement with the Allies for fear of repercussions. It is extremely difficult therefore to control the passage of foodstuffs and war material destined for the enemy. I was given many instances of this.

It was suggested as a partial solution of this problem that foreign firms and companies would be prepared to have a working agreement with Great Britain, not bringing the Dutch or Belgian Governments into the scheme.

(6) Ymuiden.

I consider it would be definitely unwise for a visit to be made to Ymuiden at present for the following reasons:-

- (a) It is in one of the areas declared to be in a state of siege.
- (b) There is no real excuse for a visit there.

I was told there were some 20 Polish trawlers at Ymuiden in poor repair, the French having already purchased the best eight.

The crews know when they are on a good wicket and prefer to stay put and wax fat on good Dutch food which they are given gratis.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
CAB 63/129									
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
1	2	3	4	5	6				
						1	2		

Lord Hankey.

This is the
aide-memoire
prepared for C.N.S.
this morning

L. H. H. H.

9. XI. 39

155

166
Ch Harris

SECRET.

DEMOLITION SCHEME FOR HOLLAND. *8.8.44*

Demolition Parties.

3 main parties have been told off as follows:-

- 1 for Rotterdam; and the Hook of Holland
- 1 for Amsterdam and Ymuiden;
- 1 for Flushing.

Each party consists of a Captain R.N. and 20 Naval Ratings trained in demolition.

In addition there is an R.E. detachment about 60 strong *for Rotterdam* and a similar but smaller detachment for Ymuiden.

Naval demolition parties are to tackle port facilities and coast defence guns. R.E. are to deal with demolition of oil reserves.

Period of Notice.

The whole of the parties could leave Chatham in 3 destroyers, 1 for each port, at 24 hours notice. All stores are ready. R.E. would reach Chatham 12 hours from receipt of order, i.e., 12 hours before destroyers leave.

Destroyers are not definitely told off but can be made available within this period.

Previous Reconnaissance.

The 3 Naval Captains have already reconnoitred their areas in plain clothes, except Ymuiden which is a restricted area.

Co-operation with the Dutch.

It is emphasised that owing to the small size of the parties little could be done without Dutch co-operation. So far no contacts have been made with the Dutch on the question of demolitions.

Demolition Scheme for Belgium
ANTWERP

Arrangements have also been made to send a similar party to Antwerp. This is also at 24 hours notice.

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

Measures to be taken in the event of an invasion by Germany.

Shortly after the War Cabinet considered this question on October 26th, the following action was taken.

- (1) The scheme was brought up-to-date so as to embody the latest information.
- (2) A document was drawn up assigning the responsibility for all action and defining that responsibility.
- (3) The Foreign Office on November 1st communicated the summary to the Ambassador at Brussels and the Minister at the Hague with a letter impressing upon them that their duties in an emergency were as follows:
 - (a) To impress on the Government, to which they were accredited, the importance of preventing assets of military or economic value from falling into the hands of the Enemy.
 - (b) To ask the Government whether the co-operation of the British Forces in this work would be welcomed, and, if so, to inform them of the plans which had been made and were ready to be implemented.
 - (c) In the event of a favourable answer to make, with the help of the Service Attachés, all the necessary arrangements to secure the safe arrival of the British Forces and their reception by the Dutch and Belgian authorities.
 - (d) To report immediately to the Foreign Office whether the Government were willing to accept our co-operation.
- (4) The Naval arrangements for sending destroyers to Dutch ports and Antwerp, and the Military arrangements for sending demolition detachments in those destroyers, with a view to assisting and supplementing the work of the Dutch and Belgian Governments, were tuned up and co-ordinated. The Military party is ready at 12 hours notice, and the destroyers are ready at 24 hours notice. The Naval Captains, who will be in charge of this work, have visited the ports at which they will operate (except Ymuiden) which is a small port.

The destroyers are not definitely told off but can be made available within the 24 hours

The summary of the plan, excepting only the arrangements with regard to gold, was

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

168

communicated to the French Military authorities.

News has been trickling in nearly every day, mostly from Naval, Military, Air and Diplomatic Attachés, who have carried out invaluable work in an informal way, which tends to show that both the Dutch and Belgian authorities are taking the question of demolitions very seriously.

Here are a few details:

Gold and Securities.

There is nothing more to report, but Sir R. Clive confirms that the question of gold reserve and negotiable securities has already engaged the attention of the Governors of the National Bank and the Société Générale. The Ambassador will take every opportunity, in conversation with Bankers, to emphasise the necessity of precautionary measures in regard to negotiable securities.

As to Holland, Sir Neville Bland confirms on the authority of the Director-General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs that two-thirds of the Dutch gold reserve is at present in the U.S.A. and South Africa - most of it in the former.

Although, as I previously reported, the Head of the Dutch National Bank is alive to the importance of this question, we have no positive evidence of arrangements made to withdraw the remainder of the gold reserve, and it is difficult to see what further action can be taken until the emergency arises.

Oil.

Holland. Information has been received from Mr. Kestler, a leading man in the oil industry in Holland, that the Dutch Military authorities have made all plans to destroy stocks of petroleum products

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
Reference:-	

completely, and that they are satisfied that this can be done in a matter of 12 hours. The tankers will be got away; if this is not possible, the idea is to destroy them too. This is confirmed from other sources.

Belgium. We have received information said to be "on unimpeachable authority" from a Mr. Godber, the oil expert, that the Belgian Government have made plans for the prompt destruction of all oil stocks in the event of invasion. The Naval Attaché reports that stocks of fuel and other stores at Antwerp will be destroyed, and that plans for doing so are in hand. The Military Attaché also is of the opinion that the Military authorities are quite aware of the necessity of preventing valuable stocks of material falling into the hands of the Enemy, and he considered it improbable that they have overlooked any important steps.

If the above information is correct, our men on the spot will have to proceed rather cautiously in the event of an invasion of either Belgium or Holland. But I do not think we need alter our plans, which were laid on the assumption that the Belgian and Dutch authorities ought to do these things themselves; but that we ought to be in a position to supplement their action or, in the last resort, replace it.

Metals.

Belgium. The Ambassador reports that the stock of nickel is already reduced to a minimum. Copper stocks are to be maintained at approximately their present level, namely 30 - 40 thousand tons. That information only reached me yesterday. I have written to the Ministry of Economic Warfare asking if

170
if anything can be done to get it reduced.

Shipping.

Belgium. The Naval Attaché reports, on official information, that plans are in existence for the speedy evacuation of all shipping in the port of Antwerp, which will be routed to French or British ports with the exception of a certain number of ships for sinking in the channel to the approaches to the port. Preparations have been made for increasing the traffic at the other Belgian ports, such as Zeebrugge and Ostend, if Antwerp ceased to function owing to Enemy action. At Ghent, Bruges, Zeebrugge and Ostend lock gates in the entrances to the canals will in the last resort be destroyed; ships and barges will be sunk in suitable positions in the harbours. The Naval Attaché has the impression that the whole matter had been carefully considered by the Belgian authorities. The only exception was the removal of the canal barges, which the Belgian official who gave the information made a note of and undertook to raise with the Ministry of Inland Waterways.

It will be recalled that the Navy has block ships ready to proceed to Zeebrugge and Ostend to co-operate in blocking the ports.

Here again our Naval authorities will require to proceed with caution in view of the arrangements made locally for demolitions. I have written to the Admiralty about this.

Holland. I have no fresh information about plans for dealing with shipping in Holland, but as I informed the Cabinet on the last occasion, the Dutch shipowners are alive to the importance of getting their ships away, and have been in communication with the Ministry of Shipping.

6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					
CAB 63/129					
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					

Air Arrangements.

The only fresh information on this side is that the Air Attaché reports that by devious methods he has been able to ascertain that the Belgian Air Staff have considered plans for the destruction of their air matériel and aerodromes. He adds that the question of the evacuation of civil aircraft and personnel, as well as all Military aircraft, will, of course, be taken up as soon as necessary after the outbreak of war.

From this statement it will be seen that since I last reported the most important changes have been as follows:

- (1) A tuning up of the readiness and completion of our own arrangements.
- (2) The receipt of information indicating that the Dutch and especially the Belgian arrangements are probably more complete than we had anticipated. This however need not, I think, necessitate any alterations in our own plans.

9th November, 1939.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY SENT TO: COLONEL JACOB.

172

MOST SECRET

9th November, 1939.

In view of the present menace to Holland and Belgium I have been overhauling once more our plans for preventing important assets from falling into the hands of Germany in the event of a successful invasion, as well as for blocking Zeebrugge and Ostend.

As you are no doubt aware, information has been received from the Naval and Military Attachés and other sources which indicates that the Belgian Government and, to a less extent, the Dutch Government, have made considerable preparations for dealing with these matters themselves.

For example,

"At Antwerp plans are in existence for the speedy evacuation of all shipping in the port, with the exception of a certain number of ships which will be retained for sinking in the channel to the approaches to the port. Stocks of fuel and other stores will be destroyed, and plans for doing so are in hand. At Ghent, Bruges, Zeebrugge and Ostend lock gates in the entrances to the canals will be destroyed. Ships and

barges

The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, C.H., M.P.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

berges will be sunk in suitable positions in the harbours."

In Holland the arrangements are probably far less forward, but from a good Dutch commercial authority (Mr. Kestler) we learn that the Dutch Military authorities have made preparations to destroy stocks of petroleum products completely, and that they are satisfied that this can be done in a matter of 12 hours.

The British Ambassador in Brussels and the British Minister in the Hague have instructions, when the emergency occurs, first to impress on the Government concerned the importance of taking action in these matters, and secondly, to ask them whether the co-operation of the British Forces in this work will be welcomed, and if so, to inform them of the plans which are made and are ready to be implemented. Also they are instructed that in the event of a favourable answer, ^{they are} to make, with the help of the Service Attaches all the necessary arrangements to secure the safe arrival

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
	2
	1

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

arrival of the British Forces and their reception by the Dutch and Belgian authorities, and to report immediately to the Foreign Office.

I do not think it is necessary in the above circumstances to make any alteration in our plans. It is, however, I think important that the Naval Officers concerned should be informed of the position so as to avoid any risk of a clash with the Dutch or Belgian authorities. This applies to those concerned in Zeebrugge and Ostend, just as much as at Antwerp and the Dutch ports.

Our main difficulty is going to be in timing the exact moment for the despatch of these expeditions. But as 24 hours will be required to collect the destroyers for Holland and Antwerp and to prepare them for departure, there should be time to obtain the agreement of the Dutch and Belgian Governments to the expedition.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY TO: COLONEL JACOB

175

MOST SECRET.

9th November, 1939.

You will remember that some time ago the Cabinet asked me to keep an eye on the question of preventing important stocks of material of various kinds falling into the hands of the Germans in the event of an invasion of Holland or Belgium.

In view of the present menace to these countries I have been looking into the matter again.

On most questions I think we have made all possible preparations for destruction or removal of stocks. I gather, however, that stocks of copper in Belgium are to be maintained at approximately their present level, i.e. 30 - 40 thousand tons. I gather also that the questions of cobalt and uranium are still under consideration.

I do not know whether your Department can exercise any further pressure with a view to the removal of these and other metals, the total stocks of which are said to have been reported in the Ambassador's despatch

No.

Ronald H. Cross, Esq., M.P.

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

176

No. E.W.185 of the 17th October. The Ambassador's suggestion is that it might be done unofficially, possibly by Lord Stonehaven who is a Director of the Union Minière. I know that your Department has already been active in this matter, but I should be very grateful if you would let me know whether you can do anything more.

Reference:-	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	CAB 63/129	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	1	2	3	3	6	6
				1	1	1	1	2	2

Belgium - Holland file
MOST SECRET.



177

10th November, 1939.

My dear Maurice,

Thank you for your letter of the
9th November, concerning the menace to Holland
and Belgium. I am bringing it to the attention
of those concerned at the Admiralty.

*Yours sincerely,
Louis Mountbatten*

The Right Honourable
The Lord Hankey,
P.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O..

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Handley

Col. Jacob to see.

Hankey
12.11.39

178

Ministry of Economic Warfare,
Houghton Street,
Aldwych, W.C.2.
10th November, 1939.

Dear Hankey

Thanks for your letter "Most Secret" of the
9th November on the question of removing stocks from
Belgium and Holland.

As regards Cobalt, in a conversation yesterday
with Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, M. Robiliart, one of the
Directors of the Société Générale des Minérales, told him
that stocks of Cobalt in Belgium, already very low, were
being further reduced by a shipment of 100 tons to
France; and that arrangements were being made to send
immediately large quantities of Boart to this country
for safe keeping.

As regards Uranium, Mr. Mikolajczak, also of the
Société Générale des Minérales, informed a member of this
Department yesterday that he believed that there were
several hundredweights of Sodium Uranate at Hoboken, and
that he would discuss with his people the question of
their/

The Rt. Hon. the Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

their removal here. He would also try to find out whether there are any stocks at Hoboken of Columbite (Tantalum and Niobium Ores) or products.

As regards stocks of Copper, I do not think that we can press for anything more than the Belgians have already done, i.e. the removal of stocks of refined Copper from Antwerp to Brussels and Ghent. The Belgians estimate their own annual requirements at 60,000 tons. Their present stocks are between 30,000 and 40,000 tons. A large part of this is, of course, in process of being refined. If the Belgians were to send out of the country any substantial part of their present stock of refined Copper, their munition and other works would shortly be unable to carry on.

Yours sincerely
Harold Cross

Reference:-	CAB 63/129									
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE										
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION										

Belgium Holland file

187

11th November 1929.

Dear Lord Hanky

return

the notes which you

gave to General

May at this morning's

Cabinet with many

Banks.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
1	2	3	4	5	6
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					

Reference:-

Public Reference

181

Yours are
William L. H. S.

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						CAB 63/129					
Reference:-											
1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6

ogue Reference

Measures to be taken in the event of an invasion by Germany.

Shortly after the War Cabinet considered this question on October 26th, the following action was taken.

- (1) The scheme was brought up-to-date so as to embody the latest information.
- (2) A document was drawn up assigning the responsibility for all action and defining that responsibility.
- (3) The Foreign Office on November 1st communicated the summary to the Ambassador at Brussels and the Minister at the Hague with a letter impressing upon them that their duties in an emergency were as follows:
 - (a) To impress on the Government, to which they were accredited, the importance of preventing assets of military or economic value from falling into the hands of the Enemy.
 - (b) To ask the Government whether the co-operation of the British Forces in this work would be welcomed, and, if so, to inform them of the plans which had been made and were ready to be implemented.
 - (c) In the event of a favourable answer to make, with the help of the Service Attachés, all the necessary arrangements to secure the safe arrival of the British Forces and their reception by the Dutch and Belgian authorities.
 - (d) To report immediately to the Foreign Office whether the Government were willing to accept our co-operation.
- (4) The Naval arrangements for sending destroyers to Dutch ports and Antwerp, and the Military arrangements for sending demolition detachments in those destroyers, with a view to assisting and supplementing the work of the Dutch and Belgian Governments, were tuned up and co-ordinated. The Military party is ready at 12 hours notice, and the destroyers are ready at 24 hours notice. The Naval Captains, who will be in charge of this work, have visited the ports at which they will operate (except Ymuiden) which is a small port.

The destroyers are not definitely told off but can be made available within the 24 hours

- (5) ~~The~~ summary of the plan, excepting only the arrangements with regard to gold, was

? Other documents on
look for
else where
indicated

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

communicated to the French Military authorities.

2. News has been trickling in nearly every day, mostly from Naval, Military, Air and Diplomatic Attachés, who have carried out invaluable work in ^{a great} informal way, which tends to show that both the Dutch and Belgian authorities are taking the question of demolitions ~~very~~ seriously.

Here are a few details:

Gold and Securities.

3. ^{As to Belgium} There is nothing more to report, but Sir R. Clive confirms that the question of gold reserve and negotiable securities has already engaged the attention of the Governors of the National Bank and the Société Générale. The Ambassador will take every opportunity, in conversation with Bankers, to emphasise the necessity of precautionary measures in regard to negotiable securities.

As to Holland, Sir Neville Bland confirms on the authority of the Director-General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs that two-thirds of the Dutch gold reserve is at present in the U.S.A. and South Africa - most of it in the former.

Although, as I previously reported, the Head of the Dutch National Bank is alive to the importance of this question, we have no positive evidence of arrangements made to withdraw the remainder of the gold reserve, ^{but} and it is difficult to see what further action can be taken until the emergency arises.

Oil.

Holland. Information has been received from Mr. Kestler, a leading man in the oil industry in Holland, that the Dutch Military authorities have made all plans to destroy stocks of petroleum products

6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:- CAB 63/129 PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					

completely, and that they are satisfied that this can be done in a matter of 12 hours. The tankers will be got away; if this is not possible, the idea is to destroy them too. ~~This is confirmed from other sources.~~

Belgium. We have received information said to be "on unimpeachable authority" from a Mr. Godber, ^{an Englishman of the Shell Co.} the oil expert, that the Belgian Government have made plans for the prompt destruction of all oil stocks in the event of invasion. The Naval Attaché reports that stocks of fuel and other stores at Antwerp will be destroyed, and that plans for doing so are in hand. The Military Attaché also is of the opinion that the Military authorities are quite aware of the necessity of preventing valuable stocks of material falling into the hands of the Enemy, and he considered it improbable that they have overlooked any important steps.

Omit If the ~~above~~ information is correct, our men on the spot will have to proceed rather cautiously in the event of an invasion of either Belgium or Holland. But I do not think we need alter our plans, which were laid on the assumption that the Belgian and Dutch authorities ought to do these things themselves; but that we ought to be in a position to supplement their action or, in the last resort, ^{to} replace it. ~~I have written to the~~ *M. de* *Metals.*

Belgium. The Ambassador reports that the stock of nickel is already reduced to a minimum. Copper stocks are to be maintained at approximately their present level, namely 30 - 40 thousand tons. That information only reached me yesterday. I have written to the Ministry of Economic Warfare asking if

3 s. h.
Wanderer
prohibitor
1817

A
and this applies to
2nd grade & 3rd grade
as well as 4th grade
I think.

for our Diplomatic
activities have
received instructions
at ~~the~~ which I have
already recd, &
my ^{former} arrangements with
the ^{British} ~~British~~ ^{Canadian}
about the reception of
these parties is to send

185
if anything can be done to get it reduced.

Shipping.

Belgium. The Naval Attaché reports, on official information, that plans are in existence for the speedy evacuation of all shipping in the port of Antwerp, which will be routed to French or British ports with the exception of a certain number of ships for sinking in the channel to the approaches to the port. Preparations have been made for increasing the traffic at the other Belgian ports, such as Zeebrugge and Ostend, if Antwerp ceased to function owing to Enemy action. At Ghent, Bruges, Zeebrugge and Ostend lock gates in the entrances to the canals will in the last resort be destroyed; ships and barges will be sunk in suitable positions in the harbours. The Naval Attaché has the impression that the whole matter had been carefully considered by the Belgian authorities. The only exception was the removal of the canal barges, which the Belgian official who gave the information made a note of and undertook to raise with the ^{appropriate authority} ~~Ministry of Inland~~ Waterways.

It will be recalled that the Navy has block ships ready to proceed to Zeebrugge and Ostend to co-operate in blocking the ports.

Here again our Naval authorities will require to proceed with caution in view of the arrangements made locally for demolitions. I have written to the Admiralty about this.

Holland. I have no fresh information about plans for dealing with shipping in Holland, but as I informed the Cabinet on the last occasion, the Dutch shipowners are alive to the importance of getting their ships away, and have been in communication with the Ministry of Shipping.

Can. 6000

13

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129	
Reference:-	

Air Arrangements.

The only fresh information on this side is that the Air Attaché reports that by devious methods he has been able to ascertain that the Belgian Air Staff have considered plans for the destruction of their air matériel and aerodromes. He adds that the question of the evacuation of civil aircraft and personnel, as well as all Military aircraft, will, of course, be taken up as soon as necessary after the outbreak of war.

From this statement it will be seen that since I last reported the most important changes have been as follows:

- (1) A tuning up of the readiness and completion of our own arrangements.
- (2) The receipt of information indicating that the Dutch and especially the Belgian arrangements are probably more complete than we had anticipated. This however need not, I think, necessitate any alterations in our own plans.

(Insert A & B.)

No man can foresee how people will react to the emergency of such an invasion.

9th November, 1939.

I cannot tell you whether in the turmoil of a Blitzkrieg the Dutch or a Belgian would carry out their demolition plans in whole or in part. For all we know they would fail as the Poles failed. I think we have done our best

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Public Record Office

Copyright - Not to be reproduced photographically without permission

MOST SECRET.

187
11th November, 1939.

Dear Hankey,

..... I am sending you herewith a copy of a
corrigendum sheet relating to the Confidential
Annex to W.M. (39) 77th Conclusions, Minute 1.

..... I am also returning at the same time
the copy of the Confidential Annex which you had
alsady returned, as you will no doubt requirs it
when submitting the corrigendum sheet to Lord
Hankey.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald J. Harris

The Hon. Christopher Hankey,
TREASURY CHAMBERS.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

1	2	3	4	5	6
1			2		

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

O

188.

MOST SECRET.

189

W.M.(39) 77th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 1.

Confidential Annex.

CORRIGENDUM.

Page 13, line 6.

For "of Holland or Belgium"
substitute "of Belgium, or of Holland and Belgium,".

6, Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

11th November, 1939.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Bibliographic Reference

SECRET.

C 18243/G

190

With Mr. Strang's compliments.

11.11.39.

Lord Hanky

15 See

Григор

Noted

4

12-XL-39

191

No. 699
(910/12/39)

BRITISH LEGATION,
THE HAGUE.

Secret.

November 8th, 1939.

My Lord,

With reference to your telegram No. 151 of the 18th, and Sir A. Cadogan's letter (G 16287/G) of the 12th, October last, regarding the question of demolitions in the Netherlands, I have the honour to transmit to Your Lordship herewith a copy of a memorandum by the Military Attaché at His Majesty's Legation concerning the conversation which he had on this subject with a member of the Netherlands General Staff.

2. The Military Attaché has already communicated this information to the War Office direct by telegram.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servant,

(Signed) Neville Bland.

The Right Honourable
The Viscount Halifax, P.C., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.,
etc., etc., etc.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

H.M. Minister.

1. I soundad Major v.d. Plassche on the subject of the demolition of power stations and industrial installations.

2. He stated that the General Staff were fully aware of the necessity for such demolitions, and had considered the question thoroughly. He was unable to give me any details of the schemes proposed, and I thought it inadvisable to press him too much.

3. He stated that, for about a year before the outbreak of war, an officer of the General Staff had been employed solely on the study of this subject.

W.L.G.

November 3rd, 1939.

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE CAB 63/129 COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

Monday

173

LORD HANKEY.

I attach a copy of a letter from General Pownall to Hayman-Joyce in the War Office.

2. I doubt whether anything useful could be done on the first point he raises. The only step which has already been taken is that the Air Mission which will go into Belgium, and the Air Attaché in Holland will do their best to get skilled aircraft personnel evacuated.

3. With regard to the second point, I think General Pownall has overlooked the fact that Flushing is one of the ports to which a part of Admiral Binney's party is to go.

12th November, 1939.

Maurs

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY.

194

SECRET.

Central Headquarters,
British Expeditionary Force.

6th November, 1939.

Dear Hayman,

Your Memorandum M.O.4 B.M. 1/165.

Two points:-

1. A good form of economic demolition is the evacuation of skilled workmen. I believe the Germans employed about 7,000 Belgian workmen on the submarines operating from the Belgian coast (which were responsible for some 23% of the sinkings).
2. What about Flushing? It seems to an outsider a useful submarine base, and the communications to it from the interior of Holland also seem, from the map, to be capable of "treatment".

These are but suggestions you may like to put up to someone.

Yours ever,

(Signed) H.R. POWNALL.

Lieut.-Colonel H.J. Hayman-Joyce,
M.O.4.,
The War Office,
London,
S.W.1.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

A small correction on page 3.
13.11.39
H. H. H. 1939

MOST SECRET.

12th November, 1939.

Dear Private Secretary,

W.M. (39) 79th Conclusions, Minute 8.

I am sending you herewith a copy of the
Confidential Annex to the Conclusions of the War
Cabinet referred to above.

Should any amendment be desired, perhaps
you would let me know.

Copies of this Annex are being sent only to
those directly concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald A. H. H.

The Private Secretary to
The Minister without Portfolio.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
Reference:-									
CAB 63/129									
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

196

~~SECRET~~
MOST

13th November, 1939.

As you know, the War Cabinet remitted to me some time ago the task of trying to limit the amount of advantage the Germans would obtain if they invaded Holland and Belgium. I have already covered a great deal of the ground in my reports to the Cabinet.

To-day I have received through the War Office the following suggestion from ⁺General Pownall as to the possibility of obtaining skilled workmen from Belgium:-

*A good form of economic demolition is the evacuation of skilled workmen. I believe the Germans employed about 7,000 Belgian workmen on the submarines operating from the Belgian coast (which were responsible for some 25% of the sinkings).

Do you think there is any advantage to be derived from following this up, and can you suggest any means of doing so?

The Rt. Hon. Leslie Burgin, LL.D., M.P.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Acknowledged by telephone
Action being taken.

197

MOST SECRET.

13th November, 1939.

Dear Morton,

I have been rather plastering your Minister with letters lately. As this is on a point of detail I am saving him by sending it to you.

I have been wondering whether there are large stocks of rubber tyres and rubber in Belgium and Holland. I don't know whether they have factories in those countries for tyres or not. But I should imagine they have.

Do you think anything could be done from your end to get those stocks reduced ^{now} or destroyed if Belgium and Holland are over-run? There may not be much time.

Yours ever,

Major D.J.F. Morton, C.N.G., M.C.,
Ministry of Economic Warfare.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1 2 3 4 5 6					

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

193

TREASURY CHAMBERS,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.
(Tel. : WHITEHALL 1234.)



In any reply
please quote Regd. No.

PA *Mr 13/11*

Link: Colonel E.I. Jacob

With Lord Hankey's compliments.

(To see and return please).

14th November, 1939.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference

HOUGHTON STREET,

MOST SECRET.

ALDWYCH, W.C.2.

14th November, 1939.

Dear Lord Hawkey

In answer to your letter of the 13th November about rubber in Belgium, we understand from the best information available to the Rubber World that stocks of raw rubber in Belgium and Holland are both very small, probably not exceeding 200 tons in the two countries added together. Stocks of tyres are "normal" and not large. Probably, however, they are very widely distributed around the country and it would be a practical impossibility to collect them together and evacuate them.

As regards factories for making tyres, there is only one in Holland which may not have begun production as it was just being completed before the war. It is at Eindhoven and belongs to the Michelin concern. In Belgium there are three factories of importance, the Englebert factory at Liege which is large, the Michelin factory at Brussels, also a big one, and the Bergougne factory at Evergem-lez-Grand, which is rather small.

I am told that it would be worth while destroying the Englebert and Michelin factories at Liege and Brussels and the best, if not the only method, would be by fire. Were a series of intensive fires to be started around and amongst the rubber stock, it would be a most difficult job to extinguish them.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

I am passing a copy of this letter to
Beaumont-Newbitt at the War Office, who may have
some opportunity of suggesting a suitable firm to
the Belgians in certain circumstances.

Yours ever,

S. Morrison.

The Rt.Hon. The Lord Hankay,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,
Treasury Chambers,
S.W.1.

Reference:-

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

P.A. to Lord Hacking ²⁰¹

Wined you please
substitute this for
the copy I sent over
on Monday. There are
no amendments of
interest to Lord Hacking's
particular concerns.

Wined you please
return the draft copy
to Captain Clarke.

Mars
14/11

SECRET.

Ref: S 50/7.

LORD HANKEY.

Anglo-French Liason Mtg.

... I attach a copy of the Minutes of the 68th Meeting of the Permanent Military Representatives, at which they discussed the French plan for Walcheren, and the comments of the Chiefs of Staff upon it.

2. You will see, on page 6, that the action of British demolition parties at Flushing and Antwerp was discussed, and the importance of co-ordinating our plans with those of the French was emphasised. Conclusions 7 and 8, on page 10, relate to the same subject.

3. It seems to me that there is a difference between the action of the party at Antwerp, and the action of the party at Flushing. Antwerp is the final redoubt of the Belgian Army, and the demolition of oil, etc., to be carried out there will take place under the orders of the Belgians; and the presence or otherwise of French troops on the Belgian left does not seem to me to affect the question.

4. The operation at Flushing, on the other hand, is very much bound up with whether the French go there or not. In fact, it is questionable whether we should send our party to Flushing if the French succeeded in occupying the islands.

5. It does not appear to say so specifically in the Minutes, but I am assured by Captain Clarke that the French were asked to let us know as soon as they could whether General Gamelin proposes to carry out his plan in spite of our objections, or not. If he does intend to do so, then I think we should consider the arrangements for the Flushing party, and possibly change them. I do not think the Antwerp party will be much affected either way.

6. I am keeping in touch with Clarke, and will let you know as soon as we receive a reply.

France

13th November, 1939.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

203

To:- Lord Hankey.

From:- Major Morton, Ministry of Economic Warfare.

There are at present 9 ships carrying petroleum held in our Contraband Control - 7 for Holland and 2 for Belgium. The 7 ships for Holland carry 74,000 tons of petroleum, of which 30,000 is crude, the remainder refined. The 2 ships for Belgium contain 12,000 tons of refined products.

Lord Hankey will doubtless remember that the Royal Dutch Company have told us that Holland holds six months stocks and Belgium three months.

14th November, 1939.

2 or 3
Guaranteed by
only 6 not
available

6	5	4	3	2	1
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

Belgium Holland file

COPY.

20/p

Ministry of Shipping,
Berkeley Square House,
Berkeley Square,
London, W.1.

22nd November, 1939.

SECRET

Dear Colonel Jacob,

Foley wrote to you on the 3rd November regarding, inter alia, the Belgian barges. You had already had an informal memorandum from us on the subject which indicated that enquiries were still proceeding.

These enquiries have now been completed and I enclose a more formal memorandum which embodies everything we have been able to ascertain up to date. In present circumstances, I am not sure whether you require this, but thought I had better send it.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) W.G. HYNARD.

Lt. Col. E.I.C. Jacob.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

206
BELGIUM.APPRECIATION OF POSITION IN REGARD
TO BARGES ON INVASION.I. THE PROBLEM.

The problem is to ascertain what measures can be taken in the event of Belgium being invaded to prevent barges in Belgium, particularly those in the canals, from falling into enemy hands.

II. THE PRESENT POSITION.(a) General Particulars.

There are some 6,000 barges registered in Belgium varying from the small 100-50 ton self-propelled, horse and man drawn barges used on the canals to the 1,000 - 1,500 ton self-propelled barges used on the rivers. Of the total number of barges, some 60 per cent. are dumb and about 40 per cent. self-propelled.

(b) Distribution.

Of the total number of barges, approximately half are at present laid up empty. The following table shows the probable approximate disposition of the laid up barges and the probable division between dumb and self-propelled at each centre:-

<u>Base where Laid</u> <u>Up.</u>	<u>Total Laid</u> <u>Up.</u>	<u>Total Self-</u> <u>Propelled.</u>	<u>Total Dumb.</u>
Antwerp	1200-1500	480-600	720-900
Ghent	400- 500	160-200	240-300
Liege	400- 500	160-200	240-300
Haccourt	400- 500	160-200	240-300
	2400-3000	960-1200	1440-1800

Reference:-
CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

206

(c) Ownership.

Almost all the barges belong to independent owners, who themselves work and live on their own barges and there is no centralised organisation controlling them.

III. GENERAL REMARKS.

(a) Distribution:

It would take some three to five days for the barges at the inland centres (e.g. Liege) to be moved to the ports and even more time would be required for barges not in the main canal system. In the event of a sudden emergency, therefore, it would be almost impossible to take any effective measures in regard to barges lying other than at the ports or in their close proximity.

(b) Ownership.

The individual ownership makes it almost impossible to organize any general plans in advance and there are no Chartering Agents who could control, in this respect, any significant number of barges.

IV. POSSIBLE MEANS OF DEALING WITH THE POSITION.

(a) Before the Emergency.

(i) As stated in III (b), individual ownership renders impossible the making of general plans, not only in respect of the barges inland, but even those in the ports.

(11) It would be possible to acquire the actual ownership of some barges by purchase through ordinary commercial sources, but the total would probably not exceed, say, 150, as any purchases on a considerable scale, before the actual emergency, would be prevented by

the Belgian Government, as these barges are an essential feature in the country's distribution system.

(iii) On political grounds, the Belgian Government could presumably not allow the detailed organisation required, as it might be construed as a breach of neutrality.

(b) When the Emergency Actually Arises.

(i) Barges in the Canals.

As stated in III(a), the slow speed and other difficulties of movement would make it impossible to get more than a very small number to the ports, unless, say, a week was available for movement.

Moreover, the barges in the canals could not be withdrawn within the canal system into France, as the French canals are already congested.

(ii) Barges in the Ports.

Very few of the barges (even of the self-propelled ones) could themselves make the sea voyage from, say, Antwerp to Gravesend, and, therefore, for the direct voyage towage would be necessary. Further, many of the barges would require stiffening for the sea passage and they are in the main too light for port work.

Some towage could be carried out by ships actually in port, but the number of barges which could be dealt with is small, and in any case the operation is hazardous and subject to weather conditions.

In regard to tugs, there are some 40 situated at Antwerp, and a further 36 distributed between that and other ports, but only a proportion of these could make the sea crossing with a tow (i.e. of, say, two barges each).

It is assumed that Dutch tugs would not be able to render assistance, as they would be fully

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

engaged in dealing with their own barges.

The self-propelled barges might be able to proceed by themselves for the coastal voyage from Antwerp to the French ports (e.g. Dunkirk) whence the voyage to this country is easier, whether under their own power or by tugs.

(Intd.) W.G.H.

22nd November, 1939.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Private Secretary
Please arrange.
Al.

209

25. XI. 39
MOST SECRET.

24th November, 1939.

Mr. Hankey

Burgin has passed on to me your letter of 13th November, suggesting that in case of a German invasion of Belgium it might be useful to evacuate skilled workmen from that country and make use of them here.

The proposal raises a number of difficult problems and I suggest that the best way to make progress on them would be for Mr. Humbert Wolfe, the Deputy Secretary here to come and discuss it with you. If you agree, no doubt your Secretary would get into touch with Wolfe and suggest a time when he could come over and see you.

Yours truly
Ernest Brown

The Rt. Hon. Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,
Treasury Chambers.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

From Lt. Jacobs.
 Oct. 5 50/7
 Rec'd 28th Nov.
 210

With the compliments of the
 Director of Naval Intelligence.

Naval Intelligence Division.
 25th November, 1939.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6	CAB 63/129			
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION						Reference			

British Legation,

THE HAGUE.

10th November 1939.

Dear Admiral Godfrey,

I dined with Lieut. Comdr. Moolenburgh at his house last night. Lieut. Comdr. de Booi, brother of Dutch Naval Attache, of the Naval Intelligence staff was also present. After dinner we had a long discussion on the present situation in this country and the following is a summary of what was said.

The Dutch Naval staff expect that Holland will be invaded by Germany during the course of the next week. The reasons given for this opinion are the internal state of Germany which makes a success of some sort imperative, the necessity of obtaining aerodromes nearer to England to enable Fighter aircraft to escort the Bombers, the military advantage gained leading to an attack on France through Belgium, the German policy of a "continental blockade" of England, the submarine bases which would become available especially for the large number of small submarines now believed to be under construction in Germany. Against this is admitted the lateness in the season, which from a military point of view would appear to make the employment of mechanised units impossible, especially with all the flooding arrangements which have been made and partially carried out, but it is firmly believed that Hitler is insisting on this campaign against the advice of his General staff. Recent intelligence as to troop concentrations on the frontier, construction of pontoon bridges in the vicinity of EMMERIK, and the large number of reports of the assembly of flat bottomed, shallow draught lighters at Hamburg, Bremen & Emden have all added fuel to the flames. With regard to the lighters it is believed that these are to be used for the capture of the Frisian Islands and would operate between these islands and the shore.

The German Naval Attache has been asked several times in the last few days what all these measures portend and why the

212

tone of the German press had suddenly sharpened against Holland but he has professed complete ignorance of them and given most evasive answers. This attitude is however consistent with that adopted by him since the beginning of the war as he has always refused to give the Dutch any information on questions regarding mines, shipping etc. which they have asked him, and has generally been most unhelpful.

If and when the attack is launched, the Dutch will resist with all the forces at their command, but they are fully aware of both the inadequacy and inefficiency of these so far as the Navy is concerned. I learned for instance that the Sumatra who completed a long refit just after the start of the war has not fired a single round and that the gun's crews are completely untrained. She is employed on patrol of territorial waters between Flushing and Ameland. Ammunition is so scarce that practically no practices take place and A.A. gunnery is still in the embryo stage. The reason for this lamentable state of affairs is laid at the doors of Admirals Heeria (A.G.N.S.) and Jolles (Commanding the Naval Forces in Home waters) who cannot be roused to believe that they really will have to fight. Admiral Puratner is now mainly occupied with the higher problems of defence and is particularly worried about the capture of the Frisian Isles.

I learned that it is definitely the intention to evacuate all ships, stores and aircraft to England, but I gained the impression that the plans for doing so have not got beyond the draft stage. The same applies to the demolition of oil supplies and material useful to the enemy and I doubt whether the quantity of explosive required to do this effectively is available.

I was repeatedly asked what England could do to help Holland to resist the enemy, I replied by saying that they could be certain that we should not miss any opportunity of attacking

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

213

the enemy, but I thought they would be very unwise to count on any military assistance. It appears that the great lack of A.A. guns for shore defence is causing the greatest concern and I was asked if we would be able to send over some of our mobile A.A. units and Balloon Barrage units. I replied that I really did not know but I thought that with our commitments in France and at home I doubted if we would be able to spare any.

At the end of the discussion Moolenburgh said "Well, if the Germans do attack us they will get nothing but a swamp, because we shall cut every dike in Holland and flood the whole country."

I must apologise for this somewhat pessimistic screed but I think it reflects fairly accurately the attitude of the Dutch Naval staff at the moment.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

B.B. SCHOFIELD.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Copy

SECRET

214

MESSAGE

From Naval Attache,
Hague.

Date 12.11.39

Time

Administrative Cypher(J) by cable

Addressed D. N. I.

Reference my personal letter 10th November to D.N.I; although situation at the present time appears to have eased Dutch Naval Staff are very concerned with the defences of west Frisian Islands against attack by shallow draught troop transport which is considered will be part of plan of attack. Since they have not sufficient means to deal with such attack it is considered that they will call on our Navy and Air Force to assist with this.

Ymuiden is a stronghold of Dutch Nazis and a coup to seize port coincident with German attack is possible.

Netherlands Cruiser SUMATRA sailed for Vlissingen during the night of 10th November and will remain there at present.

1718/12

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

BRITISH LEGATION,

THE HAGUE.

15th November 1939.

Dear Admiral Godfrey,

An interesting feature of the recent crisis has been the refusal of the Dutch Government to disclose the reason which prompted them to take all the precautionary measures which they did last week. It is generally considered by most Dutch people that the mere presence of an albeit fairly large body of German cavalry on their frontier was not in itself a sufficient threat to cause the large scale flooding operations which were carried out (despite the denials of the Dutch Military Intelligence section) and the Prime Minister's speech is generally regarded as "eyewash" and has not deceived thoughtful people. As reported in my last letter, the Dutch Naval authorities made little attempt to hide their anxiety, but even they could not or would not give any inkling as to the reasons for their apprehension. The presence of a large body of heavily armed police in all the large towns has given rise to the belief that a Nazi Putsch was planned, and it is certainly difficult to account for their presence unless some internal disorder was expected. Dutch Naval and Military circles talk freely of the "stab in the back" which they expect the Nazis to give them and the fact that the Government does little or nothing to curb their activities, undoubtedly out of fear of Germany, increases apprehension on this score. Why the Putsch, if one was intended, misfired it is hard to say, but it is not unlikely that the Government got wind of it and took sufficient measures to render its success unlikely, and the German plan may hinge on a successful internal uprising. As long as both the Dutch and German Nazis are allowed free rein the danger of such a coup will remain and it is difficult to see what the Government can do, other than take precautionary

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

216

measures. I have been told that there are 1,300 Nazi sympathisers in the Dutch Army and I know of one Captain of a Dutch Minesweeper who is out and out pro-German (there is also another who is equally pro-English) and it will be interesting to see what headway the Germans make with their propaganda during the coming months. One of the themes which is being played on with particular emphasis at the moment, is the rise in the cost of living which is attributed to our holding up of Dutch ships. Pamphlets are distributed attempting to prove that since we are buying butter from Holland, the poor Dutch soldier has to go without, and so on. It is doubtful if this sort of propaganda is making much headway, but it is being assiduously pursued all the same.

My French colleague told me last night that they had reliable information that the Dutch shipped another £10 million of gold to the U.S.A. yesterday and I have been told by two fairly reliable sources that practically the whole of South Beveland was flooded on Monday for the defence of Flushing and that it will take 5 years to get this land back into condition for pasture.

Since writing the above the Military Attache has just told me that the Military Intelligence section admitted to him this morning that they had definite evidence of an internal Nazi coup for the 8th or 9th November, and that it was true that 30 to 40 arrests had been made. This after they had strenuously denied that there was anything of the sort!

As far as the Naval side is concerned, some of the precautionary measures which were taken are being relaxed, such as the re-opening of IJmuiden and the hook to shipping at night and I understand that the Sumatra has resumed her patrol of territorial waters.

(signed) B. B. SCHOFIELD.

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY

SECRET.

Ref: S 50/7.

217

LORD HANKEY.

You will remember that I recently put before you a proposal to hand over our arrangements at Antwerp and Flushing to the French. You forwarded the proposal to General Ismay, requesting him to obtain the views of the Chiefs of Staff Committee on the subject.

.....
2. The matter was referred to the Deputy Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, and a copy of the Paper which they had before them (Paper No. D.C.O.S.(39) 49 S) is attached. The Sub-Committee discussed this Paper at their meeting on 28th November, and an extract from the Minutes showing the discussion which took place, and the recommendations made, is also attached.
.....

3. You will see that the Deputy Chiefs of Staff Agree with your desire to keep our arrangements in being, but they suggest that the French should be asked to take on the commitment at Antwerp with the idea of providing a second string to our bow. The French have already undertaken to do the demolitions at Flushing, if they succeed in their occupation of Walcheren but subsequently have to withdraw. The sending of British parties to both these places will thus be for decision at the time, in the light of the situation, and of the progress of French forces.

4. If you approve the recommendations of the Deputy Chiefs of Staff, I will take steps to ask the Permanent Military Representatives to approach the French about Antwerp.

(Sgd.) E.I.C. Jacob.

30th November, 1939.

Lt.Col. Jacob

I concur.

(Sgd.) Hankey
30.XI.39.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY.

248

MOST SECRET.

PD.08311/40.

12th January, 1940.

Dear Jacob,

Will you please lay the attached proposal regarding the laying up of the blockships prepared for obstructing Zeebrugge and Ostend before Lord Hankey, as he is supervising the arrangements to be taken in the event of a German invasion of Holland and Belgium.

2. At present the ships are fully manned and the proposal would have the effect of placing the whole operation at 7 days' notice. It is thought that this notice can now be accepted as, although the possibility of German action against Belgium still remains, the military position has altered considerably. Whereas in October, 1939, the Germans might have reached Zeebrugge and Ostend in a few days, the improved Belgian military preparations and the present French and British plans now make it possible that the Germans may not reach those ports at all, and at the worst we should be able to count on a delay of two to three weeks.

3. I should be glad to have Lord Hankey's views on the matter.

Yours ever,

(Sgd.) V.H. DANCKWERTS.

Lieut.-Colonel E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
Cabinet Office,
Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

219

M O S T S E C R E T.

At present 12 officers and some 200 ratings are assembled at Sheerness in readiness for the blocking operations. For several reasons it is clearly undesirable to keep these officers and men in idleness, and their training in abeyance if there is little prospect of using them in the near future. In view of this it is proposed that the following action should be taken:-

Blockships.

2. (a) All five blockships to proceed to Chatham and to reduce to care and maintenance under the orders of the Admiral Superintendent, Chatham Dockyard. The necessary ratings for care and maintenance to be supplied from Chatham, and to be taken from the present blockships crews.

(b) Officers. Officers of blockships to be available for appointment as required. Officers of demolition parties to return to "Vernon" for disposal as required.

(c) Ratings. Ratings forming the ship's companies of blockships, except those in (a) above, and armed guards to return to their depots and demolition parties to VERNON for disposal as required.

(d) Demolition Stores and Scuttling Charges. All explosives now in the blockships to be landed and either stored at Chatham or Portsmouth as arranged by Commander-in-Chief, Nore. The scuttling charges should be laid apart at Chatham for future use in blockships if required. The explosives for demolition purposes can be regarded as available for any other service.

(e) Operation Orders. All copies of operation orders issued to be returned to the Admiralty.

3. When the foregoing action has been completed, the state of readiness will be governed by the time taken to bring forward the blockships and to provide the necessary personnel. Provided no serious defects occur, it is thought that the blockships could be brought forward and moved to Sheerness ready to sail in about 5 days from the time of arrival on board of the crews. The composition of the crews is known and their provision should not take long, say, 48 hours. Thus the blockships should be able to sail from Sheerness in 7 days and arrive in Belgian ports 8 days after being ordered to prepare for service.

Reference:-	PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE										1	2	3	4	5	6	
	CAB 63/129										1		2				
	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION																

320

~~SECRET~~Reference: S 50/7.

13th January, 1940.

Dear D. of P.,

With reference to your PD.06311/40, dated 12th January, 1940, I managed to catch Lord Hankey for a moment before he left London today, and told him that you had written making certain suggestions for laying up the ships prepared for Zeebrugge and Ostend.

As you probably know, information has been received, and was given to the War Cabinet this morning, which, if true, suggests that German action against Holland and Belgium may be imminent. In these circumstances, Lord Hankey said that there could be no question of relaxing any precautions for the next few days, or at any rate until we get some definite news one way or the other.

I propose to place your letter and enclosure before Lord Hankey on his return on Monday, and to get a decision from him as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,
(Sgd.) E. J. C. Jacob.

Captain V. H. Danckwerts, C.M.G., R.N.,
Admiralty.

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
CAB 63/129	
Reference:-	

~~SECRET~~

221

Reference: S 50/7.

LORD HANKEY.

At 5 o'clock yesterday evening, I met M. de Samblanx, the Belgian individual about whom I spoke to you on the telephone earlier in the day. Mr. Makins of the Foreign Office was also present, and I enclose a record of the conversation prepared by the interpreter.

2. We were somewhat in doubt as to the exact status of M. de Samblanx. He said he had been mobilised and had been specially charged with the question of evacuation by M. Delfosse, the Minister of Communications. His bona fides was accepted in France, and he had interviews with M. Chautemps and Government and Army officials in Paris, on the subject of the evacuation into France of refugees from Belgium. He appeared to know a good deal about French intentions, but we have not yet established whether he can be regarded as a reliable channel of communication for military plans. Enquiries on this point are continuing.*

3. The object of M. de Samblanx's visit appeared to be to obtain from us an idea of what we would do, in the event of an invasion of Belgium, to help them to evacuate shipping, and any personnel and goods which could be got away through the ports. I formed the impression that he had not in any way

*

I have since heard from Colonel Redman in Paris that the French are not giving M. de Samblanx any information as to plans, and it seems certain that he is not a proper link with the Belgian Staff. His visit to Paris was unknown to the Belgian Military Attache there.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

studied this aspect of the problem, but that, while he was in France, talking to the French, he probably found out that we had some ideas for action in emergency, and thought it would be worth his while to come over here to establish a channel of communication. There was no question of discussing in detail with him any of our plans, even if it had been safe to do so, but his visit did provide the opportunity of starting correspondence with the Belgians.

4. The channel of communication which he proposed was from our Military Attache to the French Military Attache to M. de Samblanx, as the two latter were said to be in close touch, and we know that they travelled to Paris together. M. de Samblanx would convey anything which we might communicate to his Minister. I was not able to discover whether M. de Samblanx was in touch with the Belgian General Staff, though I concluded that he was not.

5. M. de Samblanx has returned to Paris for further meetings, and goes back to Brussels on Monday. It remains to consider what use to make of the channel which has been opened.

6. The present state of alarm in Belgium may lead to Staff Conversations, in which case there will be no object in pursuing this particular line, as we shall make much better progress in direct talk between Staffs. In case, however, we are not able to induce the Belgians to agree to conversations, it might be worth while, being prepared to send instructions, through our Ambassador in Brussels, to the British Military Attache, for conveyance to the Belgians through M. de Samblanx. These could take the

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

following form:-

223

We realise that, in the event of a German invasion of Belgium, there will be a great number of assets which should not be allowed to fall intact into the hands of the Germans. In particular, the following should be dealt with:-

Oil, and other raw materials;
Dock and harbour facilities;
Shipping, including barges, tugs, etc;
Aircraft and aerodrome facilities;
Machine Tools;
Power Stations; and
Skilled Labour.

These could be prevented from falling into the hands of the Germans by evacuation, where possible, or otherwise by demolition. If you agree that this is so, would you tell us what plans you have made to deal with the various problems, and, as we would be willing to co-operate to the best of our ability, would you be willing for us to send personnel to assist?

As it is essential for real success that plans should be made beforehand, by what means can the appropriate authorities get into touch for the purpose?

7. A communication on the above lines would set the ball rolling, without giving away any dangerous information. The Military Attache, in consultation with the Naval and Air Attaches as necessary, might then be empowered to proceed, if the reply was favourable, and if contact could be established with the appropriate Belgian authorities.

8. If you agree to this action, I will arrange with the Foreign Office for the necessary telegram to be sent off on Monday.

P. Maub

14th January, 1940.

1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

SECRET.

224

RECORD of a Meeting held on 13th January, 1940, at Gwydyr House, S.W.I. between Colonel Jacob, Mr. Makins and Monsieur de Samblanx.

MONSIEUR DE SAMBLANX explained that he was the personal representative of Monsieur Delfosse, the Belgian Minister of Transport and Communications. He had been responsible for the organisation of food supplies in Belgium and was now engaged on plans for the possible evacuation of the civilian population and of certain stores and equipment. With the latter object he had journeyed to Paris two days previously with General Laurent, the French Military Attaché in Brussels, and had discussed with the French authorities detailed plans for the evacuation into France from certain Belgian areas of various categories of skilled workers and other population groups. In the course of his démarches in France, he had met Colonel Redman who, after discussing with him certain other aspects of evacuation in which the British authorities were interested, had suggested that he should proceed to London to examine them further with the appropriate officers. After obtaining telephonic authority from Brussels to follow this suggestion, Monsieur de Samblanx had come over.

He would be returning to France the next day to receive final details from the French (numbers and categories to be evacuated into France, areas of destination, dates and routes, etc.) and would then return to Brussels to report to his Minister in time for the Council of Ministers to be held on Monday, 15th January, 1940.

He ~~then~~ explained in some detail the civilian evacuation plans discussed with the French, the co-ordination of South-westward evacuation movements with possible North-eastward military movements, etc. He then turned to the question of essential supplies. Some of these, e.g. wheat, had been placed in barges on the Belgian canals, but care had been taken not to leave any number of barges on canals in the Eastern part of the country, which might be used by an invading force as bridges. It would be a simple matter to collect full details regarding the amount and positions of stocks of all important commodities.

He then went on to say that there were a large number of idle Belgian ships concentrated at Antwerp. Those ships ought, of course, to be evacuated, but it would be very desirable to make use of them ~~for~~ ^{as} evacuating useful commodities, and perhaps also people, in them. This being a matter of particular interest to the British side, he would welcome suggestions as to what arrangements should be made.

COLONEL JACOB explained that he could not put questions of detail, let alone make concrete suggestions, at that stage. The matter would have to be referred to a number of departments before anything useful could be said, though that need not necessarily occupy much time. How did Monsieur de Samblanx propose that the discussion should be pursued?

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

MONSIEUR DE SAMBLANX said that he had not had time to bring a plan with him to London, but that he would not have desired to do so. He would like to receive from the British side a series of detailed questions which he could take back to Brussels, and to which he would then be in a position to reply without delay. On the basis of those replies, British suggestions could no doubt be framed.

As a channel for further communication, he suggested the following: messages should be sent from London to the British Military Attaché in Brussels, who would pass them on to General Laurent, the French Military Attaché, who would then convey them to himself. This procedure offered the particular advantage that General Laurent was fully acquainted with the whole question and that he had throughout acted as intermediary between the Belgian authorities and French G.H.Q. in connection with all Belgian evacuation plans.

COLONEL JACOB thought that this channel would prove rapid and effective, but asked whether it would prove acceptable to the Belgian Military authority.

MONSIEUR DE SAMBLANX explained that Belgium was not on a war footing, and that ~~that~~ the matter could be dealt with on a civilian basis. It was entirely a question of making preparations for rapid action should the need arise. The Minister for Transport and Communications was, at this stage, wholly responsible for making those preparations. It was, however, essential that the utmost secrecy should be maintained and the Minister had therefore adopted the procedure of an unofficial personal mission rather than pursue the matter through the usual diplomatic channels.

COLONEL JACOB pointed out that the British authorities in London were unable to discuss any evacuation topic connected with possible military movements, since the latter fell wholly within the sphere of the Allied Commander-in-Chief in France. One consequence was that they could give no guarantee regarding the occupation of specific points, etc. Great Britain's responsibility was mainly at sea, and their suggestions would therefore be made largely from the naval, and possibly from the air, angle.

MONSIEUR DE SAMBLANX said that the Belgians were particularly concerned about the defence of the mouths of the Scheldt, which was the only outlet for shipping and stores from Antwerp. Belgium would consider herself at war if Holland was attacked, and her determination had been made abundantly clear. She had met, however, with very little response from the Netherlands, where the chief concern still seemed to be to profit financially from the situation.

COLONEL JACOB said that he proposed to lay the matter before the appropriate authorities in London at the earliest possible moment. Thereafter, ~~the~~ communication would be made through the channel suggested by Monsieur de Samblanx, provided the British authorities agreed to this course. It would, of course, be necessary to obtain official approval of this method of procedure.

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

22b

MR. MAKINS thought that Monsieur de Samblanx's explanations had made it clear that the proposed method of communication was acceptable on the Belgian side.

MONSIEUR DE SAMBLANX indicated assent, and expressed himself as wholly satisfied with Colonel Jacob's proposals. He would return to Belgium with the knowledge that this important matter would now be dealt with expeditiously.

Gwydyr House, S.W.1.

13th January, 1940.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

327

In accordance with your instructions, I went over and saw Mr. Tolerton at the Ministry of Transport, and explained to him the problem with which we might be confronted in evacuating Belgian shipping in case of invasion. He took me to the meeting of the Port and Transit Standing Committee at 11 o'clock, and showed me the working of the machinery for the control of all in-coming shipping.

2. The information which the Port and Transit Committee would like to obtain is shown on the attached list, which is actually the list for prospective arrivals dealt with to-day. They naturally like to have this information as far in advance as possible, but, in case of emergency, they would have no difficulty in dealing with ships at short notice.

3. A point which Mr. Tolerton emphasised was that, if we were to deal satisfactorily with Belgian shipping, it would be of very great assistance if we could get a representative of the Belgian shipping interests to attend the daily meeting of the Committee. This representative would be the channel for receipt of communications about shipping from the Belgian Government and the Belgian ports. All information which was obtainable from Belgium of the projected sailing of ships, and of their cargoes, would come to the Committee through him, and he would be able to answer technical enquiries, and convey the advice of the Committee to the Belgians. This is the arrangement now in force with the French, and works well.

4. I spoke also at the Committee to representatives of the Admiralty and the Ministry of Shipping. A provisional plan has already been made for the disposal of ships leaving Belgium (or Holland) loaded with refugees. They are to be sent down channel, and up the West coast, where they will be taken to safe anchorages, from which the refugees can gradually be dispersed. The Naval Attaché in Holland has details of this to communicate to the Dutch and Belgian Governments if the need arose.

5. It seems, therefore, that, if the Belgian resistance is effective, and orderly steps can be taken to deal with shipping from the Belgian ports, then, the Port and Transit Committee, with the help of a Belgian representative, could deal with the matter in the normal way. If, however, there were a sudden collapse, and it was only a question of getting ships away as fast as possible, then these ships, which would certainly be crowded with refugees, would have to be dealt with in the manner arranged by the Admiralty.

6. If we can get into touch with the Belgians, and open discussions on these matters, the first essential seems to be to get the Belgian representative designated, and perhaps introduce him into the working of the organisation. He could then set about organising his channels of communication with the Belgian ports - a matter of no great difficulty if he made use of normal commercial channels of communication available to Shipping Companies.

7.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

1	2	3	4	5	6
1			2		

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

7. I may mention that the Port and Transit Committee is in being continuously day and night, though normal business is dealt with at the morning meeting at 11 o'clock. Hence, if the emergency arose, very suddenly, there would be no difficulty in coping with it.

8. Mr. Tolerton said that he would be only too glad if, on any day you would like to choose, you would pay a visit to the Port and Transit Committee, and witness their 11 o'clock meeting. You would get a good idea of the businesslike way in which in-coming shipping is controlled.

(Sgd.) J.I.C. Jacob.

15th January, 1940.

Concur.

(Sgd.) Hankey.

16.1.40.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Private secretary.

Please acknowledge.

H.

19. I. 40

228

~~SECRET~~

LORD HANKEY.

...

I attach for your file a copy of the message to M. de Samblanx which I handed to Colonel Redman this evening.

2. The Foreign Office agreed to this message going, subject to there being no objection from the Ambassador to whom they are telegraphing. Colonel Redman will therefore not hand the paper over to M. de Samblanx until a reply has come from Brussels.

Stamps

18th January, 1940.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

229

N. DE SAMBLANX.

2. The British authorities are anxious to render such assistance as is within their power to the Belgian authorities in dealing with these matters, should the Belgian authorities desire it. It is essential for real success that plans should be co-ordinated beforehand. For this reason, the British authorities are anxious to hear whether their assistance would be welcomed, and, if so, whether the appropriate authorities in the two countries could be placed in communication. Some notes on the various aspects of the question are attached.

• • •

APPENDIX.Questions to be dealt with in connection
with British assistance to Belgium.

The main questions to be dealt with are as follows:-

A. Items to be dealt with in certain regions as soon as the invasion starts:-

Machine Tools
Barges
Power Stations
Skilled Labour.

B. Items which may have to be dealt with in the last resort, and for which plans should therefore be prepared:-

Oil
Dock and Harbour Facilities
Shipping
Aircraft and Aerodrome Facilities
Items under A in other parts of Belgium.

2. To the above, British assistance might be rendered in the following ways:-

- (1) Control and reception of shipping leaving Belgian ports, and carrying cargoes of valuable assets or personnel.

For the efficient control of this shipping, it would, when the emergency arises, be desirable to attach a representative of Belgian shipping to the British Port and Transit Committee in the Ministry of Transport. This representative, who should be fully conversant with Belgian shipping affairs, would form the link between the control of in-coming shipping in London, and the Belgian ports. It would be a great advantage if the representative could be designated in advance, and could make unofficial contact with the British authorities concerned.

- (11) Disposal of civil aircraft, aerodrome facilities, etc. from areas rendered unsafe by their proximity to the German frontier.

- (111) The reception of skilled personnel of all kinds.

- (1v) The preparation of plans for demolition of dock and harbour facilities, etc. and assistance with personnel, if, in the last resort, such action became necessary.

—oo—

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY.

OFFICERS OF THE WAR CABINET,
RICHMOND TERRACE,
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.

232

LORD HANNKEY.

SECRET.

I attach a small chronological table to show you the recent events connected with our attempted communications to the Belgian Government through the medium of M. de Samblanx.

The Foreign Office still cannot find out whether M. de Samblanx is a reliable channel or not, though he is probably quite acceptable for discussions on the refugee question. Consequently Redman has not handed over the note. I have not pressed them very hard, as I do not think discussion through such a roundabout channel will do much to advance the object in view. Unless, therefore, you would like anything more done, I propose to let things take their course.

(Sgd.) E.I.C. Jacob.

I agree. We must not commit ourselves to this circuitous channel until we are sure about the bona-fides of Samblanx. He might be very suitable for negotiations on refugees, but unsuitable for these wider issues.

31st January, 1940.

(Intd.) H.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

13th January.

Interview with M. de Samblanx. Latter suggested a channel of communication for use in discussion of the withdrawal of useful assets from Belgium in the event of the invasion of Belgium. This channel was to be M. de Samblanx - French M.A. in Brussels - British M.A. in Brussels - British Government.

14th January.

Cabinet decided that no direct approach to the Belgian Government on this subject should be made for the present. (W.M.(40) 13th Conclusions, Minute 1).

15th January.

Foreign Office wrote to Brussels Embassy to enquire status of M. de Samblanx.

16th January.

No direct and open channel of communication on these matters having yet been established with the Belgian Government, a note was prepared and handed to Colonel Redman (the member of the Anglo-French Liaison Section permanently located in France, who was over here and about to return to Paris) to give to M. de Samblanx who was known to be shortly returning to Paris to discuss with the French the evacuation of Belgian refugees. This note contained suggestions as to the type of assets which the Belgian Government might wish to salvage, and offered British assistance if required. Colonel Redman was told not to hand this note over to M. de Samblanx until the results of the Foreign Office enquiry from Brussels established his bona fides. This enquiry was repeated in a telegram (No.11 to Brussels).

19th January.

A reply from Brussels (Tel. No. 23 (R) in reply to Tel. No.11) advised caution and Colonel Redman was told by telephone to retain the note.

20th January.

A note received from the British Military Attache Brussels, enclosed a Memorandum on the evacuation of Belgian refugees which he had received from M. de Samblanx, who was previously unknown to the Military Attache. The memorandum was translated and copies were given to the Foreign Office (who in conjunction with other Departments are considering the refugee problem) and to the B.E.F.

20th January.

Telegram No. 24 received from Brussels. Enquiries proceeding, advises caution in the meanwhile.

27th January.

Letter received by Foreign Office from Brussels Embassy to confirm previous telegram, and advising caution. Result of enquiries still not known.

28th January.

Telephone message from Colonel Redman to the effect that M. de Samblanx had not yet been able to return to Paris, but hoped to do so on Monday, 29th. There was no doubt that M. de Samblanx was regarded as bona fide by the French who were carrying on all their negotiations about Belgian refugees with him.

6	1
5	2
4	3
3	4
2	5
1	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY

234

SECRET.

Reference No. S 50/7.

LORD HANKEY.

You will remember that, in January of this year, I had dealings with a M. de Samblanx, who purported to be an authorised emissary of the Belgian Government, who could deal with such matters as the evacuation of refugees, and of useful assets. With the concurrence of the Foreign Office, I prepared a Note for communication to the Belgians through M. de Samblanx, with the object of forming a channel of communication through which we might make progress with co-ordinating plans with the Belgians. A copy of the Note is attached.

2. As it turned out, M. de Samblanx was disowned by his Government, and the Note was never handed to him. Moreover, it was decided by the War Cabinet, at the time of the Belgian alarm in January, that it would be inadvisable to approach the Belgian Government officially with suggestions for co-operation in the removal or destruction of goods, on the grounds that such an approach would have a discouraging effect at a time when we were urging them to allow our armies to come to their assistance. We have accordingly made no progress in this matter, and our plans remain unrelated to those of the Belgians.

3. I have recently spoken to the Foreign Office on this subject, and I suggested that we might now make use of the channel of communication which has been opened for military matters through our Military Attaché to General Overstraeten, to attempt to make progress on our precautionary measures. I thought that we might pass to General Overstraeten the Note which was to have been handed to M. de Samblanx, in the hopes that, by so doing, we might lead up to direct contact between the appropriate authorities in the two countries. The Foreign Office have now informed me that they see no objection to such action, provided you give your approval. They would, of course, have to obtain the concurrence of our Ambassador that it would be wise at the present time to make this approach.

4. I do not think that the reasons which led the War Cabinet to veto an approach to the Belgian Government on this subject in January would hold good now, especially as the approach is through an informal military channel, and is worded in such a way as to bring out the hypothetical nature of the situation which we wish to discuss. I suggest, therefore, that you could safely give your approval to the proposed action.

5. There does not appear to be any hope of making progress with the Dutch.

(Sgd.) E.I.C. JACOB.

16th March, 1940.

Colonel Jacob.

I concur that the Ambassador should be sounded and that, if he agrees, he should authorise the Military Attaché to make an approach, using your Note as an Aide-Memoire.

(Intld.) H.

18th March, 1940.

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

COPY

235

SECRET.

It is realised that, in the event of a German invasion of Belgium, there will be a great number of assets which the Belgian Government would be anxious to save from the hands of the Germans. Many of these are situated in those regions near the German frontier, which are in advance of, or very close to the main line of Belgian defences, and must therefore be dealt with, even though there is every reason to suppose that these defences will not be penetrated. Others are situated in parts of Belgium comparatively remote from the Eastern frontier. Nevertheless, the Belgian Government will no doubt have found it necessary to make plans for their disposal. These plans will no doubt include the demolition of those important installations which cannot be removed, but which might, in the worst case, fall into the hands of the enemy.

2. The British authorities are anxious to render such assistance as is within their power to the Belgian authorities in dealing with these matters, should the Belgian authorities desire it. It is essential for real success that plans should be co-ordinated beforehand. For this reason, the British authorities are anxious to hear whether their assistance would be welcomed, and, if so, whether the appropriate authorities in the two countries could be placed in communication. Some notes on the various aspects of the question are attached.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2
3	4
5	6

APPENDIX.

Questions to be dealt with in connection
with British assistance to Belgium.

The main questions to be dealt with are as follows:-

A. Items to be dealt with in certain regions as soon as the invasion starts:-

Machine Tools
Barges
Power Stations
Skilled Labour.

B. Items which may have to be dealt with in the last resort, and for which plans should therefore be prepared:-

Oil
Dock and Harbour facilities
Shipping
Aircraft and Aerodrome facilities
Items under A in other parts of Belgium.

2. To the above, British assistance might be rendered in the following ways:-

- (1) Control and reception of shipping leaving Belgian ports, and carrying cargoes of valuable assets or personnel.

For the efficient control of this shipping, it would, when the emergency arises, be desirable to attach a representative of Belgian shipping to the British Port and Transit Committee in the Ministry of Transport. This representative, who should be fully conversant with Belgian shipping affairs, would form the link between the control of in-coming shipping in London, and the Belgian ports. It would be a great advantage if the representative could be designated in advance, and could make unofficial contact with the British authorities concerned.

- (ii) Disposal of civil aircraft, aerodrome facilities, etc. from areas rendered unsafe by their proximity to the German frontier.
- (iii) The reception of skilled personnel of all kinds.
- (iv) The preparation of plans for demolition of dock and harbour facilities, etc. and assistance with personnel, if, in the last resort, such action became necessary.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Copyright - Not to be reproduced photographically without permission

H 8 B

23

SECRET.

18th March, 1940.

You may remember that a few months ago we went into the question of what could be done to reduce the amount of loot which the Germans would obtain in the event of an invasion of Belgium or Holland, or both.

We sought to reduce the amount by the following measures:-

- (a) Its removal in time of peace.
- (b) Plans for its removal or destruction in an emergency.

With the approach of spring I suppose a German aggression comes into the picture once more, and in connection with the above I have been wondering whether your Department would have any further suggestions to make in the light of war experience.

For instance, are there large stocks of wool or cotton in Belgium or Holland that we ought to try and get reduced in normal times or in respect of which we ought to make emergency arrangements?

Ronald H. Cross, Esq., M.P.

6	
5	
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

238

-SECRET-

Ref: S 50/7.

LORD HANKEY.

... I enclose a draft
letter to the C.I.G.S.
on the matter about which
you spoke to me this
morning.

19th March, 1940.

P. Mass

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

gue Reference: C

238

ma 19 2.40.
DRAFT.-S E C R E T-Reference No. S 50/7.

March, 1940.

You will recall that, in October last, I was charged by the War Cabinet with the duty of concerting the measures which should be taken by the various Government Departments to give effect to the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff in their Memorandum (W.P.(39) 72), on the prevention of resources of all kinds from falling into the hands of the Germans, should they invade Holland or Belgium. A good deal of progress has been made since then, and a number of plans are in existence to be put into effect when the emergency arises. There is one aspect of the problem, however, which, as far as I am aware, has not been given consideration.

2. I have been very much impressed with the benefits which have been secured by Germany as a result of the capture by them of Czechoslovak and Polish war material. Not only have they been able to use this material to make favourable bargains with neutral countries, such as Roumania, by exchanging it for commodities which they badly need, but they have also, I believe, equipped a considerable number of their own formations with captured guns and ammunition. The Germans might well hope to gain similar advantages from a rapid invasion of the Low Countries.

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

3. To consider first the case of Belgium. There is clearly nothing we can do to ensure the safety of arms and equipment in the hands of the Belgian army, but there must be considerable reserves of weapons, ammunition, and equipment held in magazines and arsenals, and something might be done to assist in the removal or destruction of these if the need arose. If they could be got safely away, they would not only be saved from the Germans, but would be of great value for the subsequent maintenance of the Belgian army. Certain items of equipment, such as Bofors guns, would be of great value to ourselves.

4. It seems to me that the first step is to ascertain, if it is not already known, what reserves the Belgian army holds, and where they are located. It might then be advisable to consult the French military authorities, and see whether a plan could be concerted between the French and British Commanders-in-Chief for action when the time comes. I rather doubt whether this is a matter on which an approach to the Belgian Government would be possible, but I nevertheless feel that, if we make a study of the problem in advance, there will be more chance of effective action being taken in the end.

5. Holland presents rather a different problem, in that direct access by French or British forces is unlikely. I imagine that the Dutch reserves would mostly be held in "Fortress Holland", and some might be at the principal ports. Considerable

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

341

quantities might even be held on barges. If Holland is invaded, we shall hope to get away from the ports a considerable ^{amount} ~~quantity~~ of shipping, and it might prove possible to load up and remove a proportion, at any rate, of war equipment. This may be an optimistic view, and we shall be unable to play much part ourselves at the time, but I feel that no harm would be done if we gathered as much information on the subject as possible, and then considered the possibilities of taking action.

6. I would be very interested to hear ~~your views on this matter, and to know~~ whether you consider anything useful could be arranged.

General Sir W. Edmund Ironside,
G.C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

Reference:-	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
1	2
3	4
5	6

242

SECRET.

S 50/7.

19th March, 1940.

You will recall that, in October last, I was charged by the War Cabinet with the duty of concerting the measures which should be taken by the various Government Departments to give effect to the recommendations of the Chiefs of Staff in their Memorandum (W.P.(39) 72), on the prevention of resources of all kinds from falling into the hands of the Germans, should they invade Holland or Belgium. A good deal of progress has been made since then, and a number of plans are in existence to be put into effect when the emergency arises. There is one aspect of the problem, however, which, as far as I am aware, has not been given consideration.

2. I have been very much impressed with the benefits which have been secured by Germany as a result of the capture by them of Czecho-Slovak and Polish war material. Not only have they been able to use this material to make favourable bargains with neutral countries, such as

Roumania

General Sir Edmund Ironside, G.C.B.,
C.M.G., D.S.O.

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					
Reference:-					

243

Roumania, by exchanging it for commodities which they badly need, but they have also, I believe, equipped a considerable number of their own formations with captured guns and ammunition. The Germans might well hope to gain similar advantages from a rapid invasion of the Low Countries.

3. To consider first the case of Belgium. There is clearly nothing we can do to ensure the safety of arms and equipment in the hands of the Belgian army, but there must be considerable reserves of weapons, ammunition, and equipment held in magazines and arsenals, and something might be done to assist in the removal or destruction of these if the need arose. If they could be got safely away, they would not only be saved from the Germans, but would be of great value for the subsequent maintenance of the Belgian army. Certain items of equipment, such as Bofors guns, would be of great value to ourselves.

4. It seems to me that the first step is to ascertain, if it is not already known, what reserves the Belgian army holds, and where they are located. It might then be advisable to consult the French military authorities, and see whether a plan could be concerted between the French and British Commanders-in-Chief for action

1	2	3	4	5	6
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE					
CAB 63/129					
Reference:-					
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION					

action when the time comes. I rather doubt whether this is a matter on which an approach to the Belgian Government would be possible, but I nevertheless feel that, if we make a study of the problem in advance, there will be more chance of effective action being taken in the end.

5. Holland presents rather a different problem, in that direct access by French or British forces is unlikely. I imagine that the Dutch reserves would mostly be held in "Fortress Holland," and some might be at the principal ports. Considerable quantities might even be held on barges. If Holland is invaded, we shall hope to get away from the ports a considerable amount of shipping, and it might prove possible to load up and remove a proportion, at any rate, of war equipment. This may be an optimistic view, and we shall be unable to play much part ourselves at the time, but I feel that no harm would be done if we gathered as much information on the subject as possible, and then considered the possibilities of taking action.

6. I would be very interested to hear whether you consider anything useful could be arranged.

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Tel. No.
GROSVENOR 4060.

245
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC WARFARE,
BERKELEY SQUARE HOUSE,
BERKELEY SQUARE,
W.I.

21st March, 1940.

My dear Hankey

Thank you for your letter of
March 18th with reference to the reduction
of stocks of possible loot in Holland and
Belgium.

I am going into the matter and
will reply in detail later.

*Yours sincerely
Ramsay Lloyd*

The Rt. Hon.
The Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION



WAR OFFICE. 246
WHITEHALL.
LONDON, S.W. 1.

M.I. Inf. 708.

SECRET.

April, 1940.

Dear Hankey,

Thank you for your letter S.50/7 of the 19th March.

2. I entirely agree as to the importance of making all possible arrangements to prevent any war material in Belgium or Holland falling into the hands of the Germans in the event of a rapid invasion of the Low Countries. At the moment, however, we have very little information regarding the stocks of war material in Belgium or Holland. We have had a report from the French that the arsenals at Antwerp, Namur and Liege had been transferred to Bruges and Ghent and, although this has not been confirmed from other sources, our Military Attaché at Brussels is convinced that there are depots in the woods between Bruges and Ghent.

3. We have no information regarding the stocks of war material in Holland, except that it is reported that surplus ammunition is stored in barges in the canals round Amsterdam. We have no indication as to whether the French have information additional to the above.

4. As regards prior arrangements for the removal, or destruction, of reserves of war material; I feel that certain difficulties would be met with in practice. For example, if the Dutch or Belgian Armies were retreating they would require all the war material still available, whereas had their Armies been driven back it might quite well not be possible to remove much war material and destruction

The Right Honourable Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O. would/

Reference -									
CAB 63/129									
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6				
1	2	COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION							

247

would probably be the best that could be hoped for.

5. In the case of Belgium; co-operation with the French in the evacuation of war material would be essential, because the bulk that could be moved rapidly would probably have to be sent back across the frontier into France.

6. I have no doubt that the military authorities in Belgium and Holland are fully alive to the necessity to locate their reserves of war material in the safest possible position but there is, of course, a limit to the possibility of removing and storing in suitable conditions large quantities of war material without very great cost.

7. I, therefore, feel that the policy to be adopted in the matter should, first of all, be discussed with the French. We might, at the same time, ask them what information they have regarding the present nature and location of reserves of war material in the Low Countries. This could be done through the military representatives and, if you agree, I will tell them to start conversations. After this the question of approaching the Dutch and Belgian authorities could be settled.

Mr. Vincent.
C. J. Conside

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION											
CAB 63/129											
Reference:-											
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE											
1	2	3	4	5	6						
1	2	3	4	5	6						

248

SECRET.

5th April, 1940.

Many thanks for your letter (M.I.Inf.708) of April 1940 about the arrangements to prevent war material in Belgium or Holland falling into the hands of the Germans in the event of a rapid invasion of the Low Countries.

I entirely agree with your proposal that the matter should be discussed through the Military representatives, and would be glad if you would ask them to start conversations.

General Sir Edmund Ironside, G.C.B., G.M.C., D.S.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

249

SECRET.

5th April, 1940.

Dear Jacob,

The proposal of the C.I.C.S. in his letter, of which I enclose a copy, is so sensible and obvious that I did not think it necessary to consult you before agreeing to it.

Accordingly I only send the letters for information

Yours sincerely,

Lieutenant-Colonel E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
Offices of the War Cabinet.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

250

SECRET and PERSONAL.

15th April, 1940.

I am dropping a line privately to you as an old friend to ask that, if and when the flag falls on the Dutch frontier, you will not overlook the plans we have made for trying to secure that the Germans do not, in the event of success, get more loot than need be in Holland. Oil is especially important. The Germans have secured 200,000 tons in Denmark and perhaps another 100,000 tons at Oslo, as well as a certain amount at Trondhjem and Stavanger which they cannot hope to get away. We do not want them to get a lot more in Holland.

The Bosch have also most likely acquired between twenty and thirty million pounds in gold between Denmark and Norway, though there are rumours that the Norwegians got some of it away. I suspect, however, that the Dutch are pretty well on their toes in this matter.

I do not think that our plans involve very much work on your part. It is just a matter of giving the Dutch Government the right kick at the right moment and in
the

~~Reference:-~~
Sir Neville Bland, K.C.V.O., C.M.G.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
1	2
3	4
5	6
7	8
9	10
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	

25/

the right place. I expect most of it will fall on your staff. but if the Chief is interested it makes all the difference.

I hope you will not mind me writing you a private line: I did not want to worry you officially at the present time when you are so deluged with official telegrams.

I am glad you are where you are, though possibly you may not think it the most salubrious or attractive post in the world! But it must be very interesting.

Anyhow, I wish you the best of luck.

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Holland & Belgium.

252

SECRET and PERSONAL.

15th April, 1940.

I am dropping a line privately to you as an old friend to ask that, if and when the flag falls on the Belgian frontier, you will not overlook the plans we have made for trying to secure that the Germans do not, in the event of success, get more loot than need be in Belgium. Oil is especially important. The Germans have secured 200,000 tons in Denmark and perhaps another 100,000 tons at Oslo, as well as a certain amount at Trondhjem and Stavanger which they cannot hope to get away. We do not want them to get a lot more in Belgium.

The Bosch have also most likely acquired between twenty and thirty million pounds in gold between Denmark and Norway, though there are rumours that the Norwegians got some of it away. I suspect, however, that the Belgians are pretty well on their toes in this matter.

I do not think that our plans involve very much work on your part. It is just a matter of giving the Belgian Government the right kick at the right moment and

in

His Excellency
Sir Lancelot Oliphant, K.C.M.G., C.B.

6	5	4	3	2	1	0
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						
CAB 63/129						
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION						
Reference:-						

253

in the right place. I expect most of it will fall on your staff, but if the Chief is interested it makes all the difference.

I hope you will not mind me writing you a private line: I did not want to worry you officially at the present time when you are so deluged with official telegrams.

I am glad you are where you are, though possibly you may not think it the most salubrious or attractive post in the world! But it must be very interesting.

Anyhow, I wish you the best of luck.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

Copyright - Not to be reproduced photographically without permission

✓ 2574

Mr. Strong of the Foreign Office rang me up this morning and said that the E.B.C. had drawn attention to the necessity for preventing wireless transmitters in Holland from falling intact into the hands of the Germans if an invasion should take place.

The destruction of broadcasting stations seems to have been overlooked among the various items with which we dealt and I asked Mr. Strang whether he could find out where the transmitters were. In reply he told me that they were not in places to which the small parties we should be landing would be able to gain access and that, in consequence, apart from bombing from the air, which might be done at a later stage, there did not appear to be anything we could do beyond warning our Minister at the Hague to include wireless broadcasting stations on the list of those resources which, in emergency, he would urge the Dutch Government to deal with.

Mr. Strang is taking this action.

As regards Belgium, our Ambassador will also be warned. If, however, our advance into Belgium progresses satisfactorily we should succeed in occupying Brussels where the main broadcasting station is situated.

Answer.

20th April, 1940.

Reference--

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Seen returned

Buses

22/4/40

255

Monday. Personal Secret.

256

BRITISH LEGATION,
THE HAGUE.

April 19, 1940.

My dear Maurice,

Very many thanks for your letter of April 15, recd. at a late hour last night. I take it, perhaps presumptuously, as a great compliment that you should have written to me personally on this matter.

You will have seen from my recent telegram the difficulty, or rather impossibility, of making any advance arrangements with the Dutch about even preliminary precautions, and how far they will collaborate when, to use your words "the flag falls", it

is

6	5	4	3	2	1
1	2	3	4	5	6

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Reference:-

is hard to say, though they constantly assure me that they are alive in the dragons and are taking adequate precautions. At least as regards gold I am reliably informed that more than half is already in America or South Africa and that the rest is behind the water-line.

Any way we have, all ready written out, the statement of our own precautionary measures and it is only a question of signing & dating the documents before they are handed in to the Dutch Govt. What their reactions will be there when the blow comes remains to be

seen

238

BRITISH LEGATION,
THE HAGUE.

John: one can only pray that they
will be less unaccommodating
than (I again refer to recent
to legation) they have been to
similar propositions hitherto. Though
no regrets felt as such, it must
be born in mind that it would
be folly, if so long as they
continue to fight if we asked them
to destroy material essential to
them for carrying on the war.

Please forgive an illegible scrawl:
our two typists have more than they
can do as it is without my
adding to their burden by dictation.
Thank you again for writing.

Reference:-	
CAB 63/129	
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2
3	4
5	6

259

22-9

so kindly & sympathetically.
 How I wish we could meet &
 have a talk before we are driven
 out of this country, which I love!
 All possible good wishes
 from

Yours ever

David Brand

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0

260

PERSONAL & SECRET.

22nd April, 1940.

My dear Neville,

Thank you so much for your personal and secret letter of April 19th. I quite appreciate your difficulties. It is said that "God helps the man who helps himself." Certainly man cannot help these neutrals against the Germans if they will not help themselves.

Yours ever,

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

Sir Neville Bland, K.C.V.O., C.M.G.,
British Legation,
The Hague.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

TOP SECRET.

261

COLONEL JACOB.

Many thanks for your minute about including wireless transmitters among the loot which we wish to avoid falling into German hands in the event of an invasion of Belgium or Holland.

I gather that all the necessary action is being taken by the Foreign Office.

We ought to include it in our list next time there is a revise. You may like to see the enclosed correspondence I have had with Sir Neville Bland, our Minister at the Hague. Kindly return it when read. I also wrote to Sir Lancelot Oliphant but have not yet received his reply.

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

TREASURY CHAMBERS,

22nd April, 1940.

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION



SECRET

262
BRITISH EMBASSY,
BRUSSELS.

24 April, 1940.

My dear Maurice —

Many thanks for your letter of April 15 Secret and Personnel regarding the plans that have been made with a view to ensuring that the Germans are deprived of as much loot as possible in the event of an attack on this country.

2. Let me say at once that no opportunity has been lost by members of the staff of the Embassy in conversation with industrialists, bankers and officials to urge the importance of precautionary measures being taken. Though considerable quantities of contraband raw materials remain in the exposed areas, it is common knowledge that a large amount of wool, cotton and various metals has been removed to what may be considered as relatively safe areas.

3. As regards gold reserves, I do not think we need entertain any very serious misgivings, since so long ago as October last precautionary measures had been taken and the bulk of the gold supplies had been removed

The Right Honourable
Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

to/

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

263

-2-

to England, New York and possibly Canada. What remains in this country is, I am told, kept in a safe zone, probably in the neighbourhood of Bruges or Ostend. I shall of course lose no opportunity which private conversations may afford to press upon leading bankers, industrialists and politicians the vital importance of having all gold stocks and negotiable securities etc. kept in a safe zone or transferred abroad.

4. In so far as oil is concerned, the present stocks are believed to be in the neighbourhood of 300,000 tons which we are about to reduce to some 180,000 tons or say three months requirements. I am causing enquiries to be made regarding the main storage zones of this oil, the bulk of which I understand is at Antwerp. There seems to be little doubt that the Belgians, who have had ample time to make their plans, are fully alive to the danger of oil stocks falling into German hands and that they have plans of their own for destroying such stocks should the danger of their falling into enemy possession become imminent.

5./

Reference:-		PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE	
CAB 63/129		COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION	
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12

264

5. If, as may well be the case in the absence of effective allied support on the Albert Canal and Meuse Lines, a large area of Eastern Belgium including those zones in which sections of the wool, engineering and leather trades are concentrated fall into enemy hands, there is no doubt I fear that considerable stocks, small though they may be in relation to German requirements, of important raw materials will fall to the enemy. But you may rest assured that we will do what we can here to impress upon the authorities the importance of removing as much as possible of them into the safe zones before it is too late.

Yours ever
Lancelot Peckham.

Reference:-									
CAB 63/129									
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION									

265

SECRET.

1st May, 1940.

My dear Jacob,

I enclose correspondence with Sir Lancelot Oliphant
our Ambassador in Brussels about our plans re Belgium. On
the whole his letter is rather reassuring. Please return
Oliphant's letter which I send in the original.

Lieut-Colonel E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
Offices of the War Cabinet.

Reference:-	CAB 63/129					
PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE						
COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION						
1	2	3	4	5	6	
						1
						2

COPY.

TREASURY CHAMBERS,

2.66

S.W.I.

SECRET.

1st May, 1940.

I am much obliged for your letter of the
24th April about plans for certain eventualities. I am
also rather reassured. The more so because I realise how
completely you have gripped the idea as I knew you would.

Seen and returned

*- Dissects.
1/5/40*

His Excellency
Sir Lancelot Oliphent, K.C.M.G., C.B.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Personal & Secret



BRITISH EMBASSY,
BRUSSELS.

2nd May, 1940.

my dear Maurice.

In paragraph 4 of my letter of April 24 I referred to the question of oil stocks in Belgium and expressed the opinion that there was little doubt that the Belgians themselves were fully alive to the danger of these stocks falling into German hands and that they had plans of their own for destroying them in case of need.

2. We have now received ample confirmation of the fact that the Belgians do not intend to be caught napping. You will see from the enclosed memorandum reporting the recent discussions on the subject which took place in Paris between ourselves, the French and the Belgians, that the Belgian spokesmen declared that "the Belgians were absolutely determined that if and when Belgium was invaded their oil should not fall into German hands." In the circumstances we can, I think, set our minds at ease.

3. I am happy to add that since writing my letter of April 24 I have received further confirmation of the fact that large stocks of raw materials notably wool and cotton have been removed to Flanders.

The Right Honourable
Lord Hankey, G.C.B.,
G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

James Curran
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

268

1ST MEETING PARIS APRIL 17-20

The Belgian representative turned out to be a Major in the Engineers - a fat-faced man in the peculiarly monstrous shade of khaki which the Belgians affect. He could not have made a more favourable impression. The suspicious and far from Belgophil French delegates said afterwards that they were quite convinced the Major was telling the whole truth and concealing nothing. They themselves were ready to accept his facts and figures without further discussion. Unfortunately they were obliged to refer to M. Pinsau and what view he would take was unpredictable.

of/

Reference:-

CAB 63/129

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

1	2	3	4	5	6
1			2		

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

269

of mineral oils falling into German hands: did the Allies understand that the Belgians would dislike it even more? The Allies were no doubt excellent judges of the stocks of oil in Belgium and what could or should be done to protect them: was it not arguable that the Belgians were even better judges, since they were in full possession of the facts while the allies could only guess and estimate?

The Belgians were absolutely determined that if and when Belgium was invaded, their oil should not fall into German hands. They had therefore placed more than half their stocks west of the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal, i.e. in the part of Belgium furthest from Germany and nearest to France, and had concealed them underground. They had reduced stocks in the east of Belgium, even in a centre such as Liège, to the bare amounts necessary for daily consumption. As regards Antwerp they had arranged either to pump oil into the river, or to drain it into trenches, or to flood the heavy oils with light oils and set fire to the mixture.

The Allies estimated Belgian stocks, exclusive of lubricants, at 300,000 tons. The Major did not know how ~~this figure had been reached~~ but it was wrong by no less than 70,000 tons. The total stocks in Belgium, including all Government reserves etc., etc., were as follows on the morning of April 17th.

Crude	15,000 tons
Petrol (Essence d'auto and aviation spirit)	113,900 tons.
Kerosene (Pétrole lampant)	6,500 "
Gas oil	54,850 "
Fuel oil	19,550 "
Diesel (marine) oil	19,250 "

229,650
230,000 tons

say

The/

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

The Belgian General Staff had made the most elaborate calculations of the amounts required per month in peace time and in war time, with the following results:

	Peace Time	War Time
Petrol	35,000 tons	45,000 tons
Aviation Spirit	-	4,000 "
Aerosene	3,000 "	3,000 "
Gas oil	13,000 "	15,000 "
Fuel oil	2,500 "	2,500 "
Diesel (marine) oil	7,000 "	7,000 "
	<hr/> 60,500	<hr/> 76,500
i.e. for 3 months	181,500 tons	229,500 tons

The Major then turned to lubricating oils.

The Belgians have, since the Luboil Agreement came into force, reduced their stocks from 60,000 to 47,850 tons. They estimate their monthly requirements in peace or war at 7,000 tons. The legal reserve, which the companies are forced to keep in hand, is 17,500 tons. Three months requirements therefore amount to 21,000 tons plus 17,500 tons or 38,500 tons. If we reduced their maximum stocks of luboil to 35,000 tons it would mean that they would be able to export hardly any at all. The Purfinol factory, where most of the luboil is handled, is west of the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal, and stocks at Antwerp will never exceed a maximum of 15-20,000 tons at one time.

The British were holding up the s.s. Alexandros Henri with 1,000 tons of huiles visqueuses, with the result that the Purfinol factory had now stopped work.

Neither the Major nor M. Suetens contested our right to hold up oil, nor did they protest or plead for mercy, etc., etc. They contented themselves with the

above/

above statement of fact and asked that the Allies should give it immediate consideration.

In my report on the meeting in Paris I am calling attention to the fact that the Belgians have abandoned all pretence of being really neutral. They say they are straining the interpretation of the War Trade Agreement in every direction so as to help us. They only want to be told what, where and why we have suspicions or complaints and they will do their utmost to put things right. Personally I have little doubt that we could safely agree to their suggestion of

230,000 tons stock of oils other than luboils
50,000 tons of luboils.

(Sd) G.H. VILLIERS

22/4/40.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

272

PERSONAL & SECRET.

7th May, 1940.

Very many thanks indeed for your reassuring letter of the 2nd May about oil stocks in Belgium, with the interesting and even amusing account of a meeting of the Anglo-French-Belgian Mixed Commission in Paris, April 17-20.

I was also glad to hear about the removal of stocks of raw materials to Flanders.

His Excellency
Sir Lanslot Oliphant, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
British Embassy,
Brussels.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Page-ence:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

273

MOST SECRET

7th May, 1940.

I think you will be interested in the enclosed letter I have received from Sir Lancelot Oliphant, which seems to indicate that the Belgians are taking seriously the danger of stocks of oil and other raw materials falling into German hands in the event of an invasion.

Ronald H. Cross, Esq., M.P.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Page 1 of 1

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

HOLLAND & BELGIUM.

274

MOST SECRET.

7th May, 1940.

My dear Jacob,

I enclose a copy of a further letter and enclosure I have received from Sir Lancelot Oliphant on the subject of oil stocks in Belgium, which is rather reassuring in character together with my reply.

I wonder whether it would be worth while giving the Cabinet a short further note on this question. It looks as if the Belgians and perhaps even the Dutch are beginning to take the matter seriously.

Yours ever,

Lieut-Colonel E.I.C. Jacob, R.E.,
OFFICES OF THE WAR CABINET.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

-SECRET-

Ref: S 50/7.

LORD HANKEY.

I have kept for our files the copy of the letter from Sir Lancelot Oliphant and the Memorandum which he enclosed.

2. I am inclined to doubt whether there is really much new material which could form the subject of a Note to the War Cabinet. As regards Holland, although we have some reason to think that they have made plans to deal with their stocks of oil, etc., we have nothing sufficiently definite to affect the operations which we have planned, and which remain the same as they have always been. Belgium is a different problem, for two reasons. First, because we sincerely hope to be able to hold that part of the country in which are situated such assets as we could in any case rescue or destroy. Secondly, the Belgian Government and people are much more resolute than the Dutch, and more likely to have made and to carry out effective plans; but nevertheless we have so far completely failed to make official contact on these matters, and nothing has come of our unofficial attempts. Our plans, and those of the French, remain as originally prepared. There is therefore very little definite information which we can tell the War Cabinet.

3. If, however, you wish a Note prepared, I will make a draft for your approval.

7TH MAY, 1940.

Imacs.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION

Tel. No.
GROSVENOR 4060.

276
Emg.
MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC WARFARE,
BERKELEY SQUARE HOUSE,
BERKELEY SQUARE,
W.I.

8th May, 1940.

My Dear Hankey

Many thanks for your letter enclosing a report on Belgian attitude with regard to their oil stocks. Your sending of this report to me was more fortunate than you could have guessed. It was in fact drawn up by my Department, but for some reason it never reached me.

I was extremely interested to read it.

*Yours sincerely
Ramsay MacDonald*

The Rt. Hon.
The Lord Hankey,
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

CAB 63/129

Reference:-

COPYRIGHT - NOT TO BE REPRODUCED PHOTOGRAPHICALLY WITHOUT PERMISSION